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Studies in The Book of Daniel

Allen P. Ross
Beeson Divinity School
Samford University

General Introduction

The following brief notes were prepared for a Bible study on the Book of Daniel. The notes are not exhaustive; the twelve lessons are merely designed to lay out the basic message of each of the twelve chapters of the book, providing some of the technical details and names that are important to the interpretation. Anyone who is studying the Book of Daniel will no doubt use several resources to help understand the text; these notes simply provide additional information for such a study.

The notes are written from the perspective of evangelical, conservative scholarship. This means that the data has been taken at face value, i.e., that there was a man named Daniel, who was taken into captivity in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, served the kings of Babylon and then of early Persia as a wise man and counselor. During that time he saw visions and received revelations about the sweep of human history during the period of time that came to be known as “the times of the Gentiles,” the time that Israel was subject to foreign powers. That began when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and took many Jews into captivity, and will extend to the second coming of Jesus Christ who will deliver his people from the bondage of the world system and establish his Kingdom of righteousness and peace. This understanding is the traditional view of Daniel. But as is well-known today, most of modern biblical scholarship wishes to date the Book of Daniel much later, somewhere in the second century B.C., and interpret it as historical reflection and not futuristic prophecy (to them it is so accurate that it

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could not have been written beforehand). They also point to alleged historical inaccuracies in the text that they say reflects a later writer’s view that had forgotten details, changes in language from Hebrew to Aramaic in the central chapters, and the presence of (three) Greek words. These details suggest to them a writing after the time of Alexander the Great, and the prophetic/historical details of the later Greek period recorded in Daniel 11 indicate a setting in about 150 B.C. As we shall see in these lessons, none of these arguments hold up under close scrutiny—but that does not mean they will change their mind and accept predictive prophecy. But the most troubling fact about all this is that if the late date is accepted, then the book has been fraudulently attributed to a Daniel in the early sixth century B.C. when it was written by someone later.

For further reading on the Book of Daniel, see the commentaries, especially Joyce Baldwin's; and see the monographs by W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968); and D. J. Wiseman, T.C. & J. R. Mitchell, W. J. Martin, and K. L. Kitchen, *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1965).

Chronology, 605 B.C–33 A.D.

BABYLONIAN PERIOD

605 Nebuchadnezzar invaded; Jehoiakim deposed; first wave of exiles

Daniel goes as a teenager to the court of Nebuchadnezzar

598 Jerusalem looted; 10,000 deported, including Ezekiel and Jehoiachin.

586 Zedekiah exiled and blinded; third exile, city burned (Book of Lamentations)

PERSIAN PERIOD

539 Persia under Cyrus (553-530) II conquered Babylon

Daniel interprets the writing on the wall for Belshazzar

Daniel serves in the court of Cyrus

536

Jews returned to the land under Zerubbabel, with Haggai and Zechariah, to build the temple again

530 Cambyses (530-522); work stopped

522

Darius I (522-486); work resumed on the temple

515 Temple was finished

490 Battle of Marathon

486

Xerxes I (486-464); lost the battle of Thermopylae and the battle of Salamis

4

480 Esther married Xerxes

464 Artaxerxes I (464-423)

454

Ezra returned to the land

444 Nehemiah returned as governor

429-404 Pelopponesian Wars

423

Darius II (423-404); time of Malachi and of the writing of Chronicles

404

Artaxerxes II (404-358)

358 Artaxerxes III (358-335); time of Philip of Macedon; Alexander born 356

335

Darius III; wars with the Greeks

334 Alexander crosses the Hellespont

333

Alexander defeats Darius; Greek period begins

GREEK PERIOD

327 Alexander conquers India;

then after his death his empire divided up; two of the areas of importance for the history of Israel are: Ptolemy rules Egypt, and Seleucid rules Syria

283 Under the reign of Ptolemy II, the translation of the Bible into Greek is begun in

Alexandria, Egypt (Septuagint)

272 Antiochus I (272-255) reigned in Syria, in Antioch

255

Antiochus II (255-240)

240 Seleucus II (240-226)

226

Antiochus III (226-187)

187 Seleucus III (187-175)

175 Antiochus IV (175-164), called “Epiphanes”;

tried to Hellenize the Jews, sacrificed a sow on the altar, caused the rebellion

168 Mattathias (168-166) led the revolt (they were priests, called Hasmoneans, or Maccabeans)

166

Judas Maccabeas (166-161) took the leadership

165 Temple was cleansed, 15

th

of Kislev; Hanukkah commemorates this.

160 Jonathan (160-143) took over;

[**146** Battle of Carthage, ending the Canaanite civilization and the curse]

HASMONEAN PERIOD

143 Simon Maccabeas (143-135)

135

John Hyrcanus (135-104)

104 Aristobulus (104)

103 Alexander Jannaeus (103-76)

76

Salome (76-67)

67

Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II conflict for power; Rome stepped in.

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ROMAN PERIOD

66

Pompey conquered the land and put it under Rome, but set up client kings

37

Herod the Great (an Edomite), made king over Galilee, Judea, and other areas

31

Battle of Actium; Herod had supported Antony and Cleopatra; but the new Caesar Augustus left him in power

5

Jesus born, December 5, or January 4 B.C.

4

Herod the Great died in March, 4 B.C. Empire divided up between three of his sons:

Archelaus (4 B.C.–6 A.D.) received Judea but was removed for cruelty and replaced by a series of Roman Procurators

Antipas (4 B.C.–40 A.D.), the “fox,” the Herod of Jesus’ trial; removed and banished to Gaul by Caligula for his ambition; replaced by

Herod Agrippa I (who died 45 A.D. on stage at Caesarea (Acts

12)

Herod Agrippa II (who tried Paul about 62 A.D.)

Philip (4 B.C.–34 A.D., received all the northern region (today's Golan Heights included); Antipas married his wife, and incurred the denunciation of John the Baptist.

B.C. -----A.D.

8 A.D. Jesus in the temple as a boy

29

Ministry of John began (14

th year of Tiberius); Jesus baptism and three year ministry

began that fall

33

Death of Jesus, Friday, April 3

rd
33 A.D.

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Study Notes for the Book of Daniel

The First Study: Daniel One

I. The Selection and Preparation

of God's Faithful Servants (Dan. 1:1-21)

A. *The First Hostages of the Captivity (1-2)*

The first wave of captives went to Babylon in 605 B.C. in the reign of Jehoiakim; the second was in 597 when Jehoiachin was forced to surrender Jerusalem and go into captivity with his skilled people, best troops, and prophets like Ezekiel; and the third wave took place in 587/6 when Jerusalem was destroyed. Thus, Jeremiah's prophecy that the captivity would be 70 years dates from 605 to 536 (Jer. 29:10).

Jehoiakim began to reign in 608 after the death of Josiah at Megiddo. The reckoning that Daniel gives follows the Babylonian system, which reckoned the first regnal year as beginning on the first of Nisan following the year of accession to the throne, hence, the third year of Jeohiakim. The Jewish calendar began the civic year with Tishri in the fall. If he began in the fall of 609, then 605 would be his fourth year (Jer. 25:1). Nebuchadnezzar did not reach Jerusalem til after the battle in November of December.

The point of the passage is clear: Nebuchadnezzar did not accomplish the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity—it was the LORD (i.e., Yahweh) sending his people into exile. This was in keeping with the divine plan of blessing and cursing in Leviticus 26, Deut. 28 and 2 Chron. 36:14-21. If God sent them into Babylon, then God was certainly able to rescue them. This note sounds the main principle of the theology of the book--the sovereignty of God over the nations.

B. *Nebuchadnezzar's*

Training Program (3-7)

The name of the king is *Nabu-kudurri-utsur*, "Nebo, protect my boundary." The god Nebo was the spokesman for Marduk (compare Hebrew *nabi*, "prophet"). The spelling of the king's name is somewhat uncertain since "r" and "n" were not easily distinguished in the Orient.

Ashpenaz (perhaps a Persian or Median name) was over the Royal Academy, the brain trust of the palace into which the best of the captives were admitted. He was called the “chief of

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the court officials.” The term *saris* means “eunuch,” one castrated, or impotent at least. But this Hebrew word is cognate to the earlier Akkadian term *sha reshi sharri* (“he who is of the king’s head,” or, a predominant court official). In the Joseph story Potiphar is a *saris*, but it is unlikely a castrated or impotent man would have a wife. It is likely that the word also applied to high court officials, especially in the second millennium B.C. (and hence Joseph’s story). But in the Neo-Babylonian empire, 612-539 B.C., it may refer to a eunuch—one who could be entrusted with the harem as well.

There were probably others in the program, but Daniel and his three friends are the only ones mentioned. The king would immediately change the names of the young men to make them fit in his court—it was what conquerors did. The name *Daniye’l* means “My judge is God”;

he was given the Babylonian name *Belt*

^e*sha’tssar*, probably Akkadian *Balat-su-utsur*, “[Nebo] protect his life.” See 4:8 where he is said to be named after the king’s god, and so “Nebo” is intended.

The other men also had name changes. *H*

^a*nanyah*, “Yahweh has shown grace,” was changed to *Shudur-Aku*, “The Command of Aku” (a Sumerian or Elamite moon god).

Misha’el,

“Who is what God is?” was changed to the pagan equivalent, *Mi-sha-Aku*, “Who is what Aku is?” ‘

^a*zaryah*, “Yahweh has helped,” was changed to ‘

^a*bed n*

^e*go*, “servant of Nego [Nebo?],”

perhaps “Servant of the Shining One” involving a play on the name Nebo.

Taking these names did not seem to trouble the exiles. Some of the captives took Babylonian names voluntarily—*Zerubbabel* is “the seed/branch of Babylon.” And *Shenazzar* even took a pagan name element, “Sin [the moon god] protect the father.” They were going to live in captivity for 70 years; they had to exist with as little trouble as possible.

But at the very outset they were faced with a clear cut challenge to their faith—to eat forbidden food in the Academy, or to obey the Law, the Torah, and defy the king, perhaps to their death. What the king called them was one thing; what they did was another. The food they

would not eat was probably food that had been offered to pagan gods, or foods the dietary laws

would have prevented. Interestingly, the test of Adam and Eve in the garden had been to eat the

forbidden fruit, and here the four Hebrews do not succumb to the temptation to eat forbidden food. Adam and Eve ate and their sin resulted in death; the four youths refused to eat, and could

have been killed, except God was sovereignly blessing them and protecting them for their faithfulness.

As an aside, it is worth underscoring the fact that these men were subjected to a rigorous training in a pagan court by a pagan caste giving them pagan names; this strongly argues for the early date of the book. What Maccabean Jewish writer would make up such a story?

C.

The First Demonstration
of Faith (8-16)

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Daniel was the first to make up his mind (“place it upon his heart”) and became the spokesman for the others. His main goal was to avoid becoming defiled with unclean meats—an idea that would have insulted the pagans. What worked to his benefit was the fact that he had a good relation with his guard and with Ashpenaz himself (*khesed*, the “favor” he found, implies a loyalty based on a relationship). He proposed a test, that they would eat pure vegetables and drink water for ten days and then see if they had become weakened in any way. This was the first test of their faith.

D.

The Excellence of God’s
Special Servants (17-21)

Verse 17 is the critical verse of the chapter, setting the stage for all that followed. God gave them knowledge and understanding; and Daniel could understand visions and dreams. They were granted these special abilities, not because of their diet, but because of their faithfulness and commitment to God’s word. Both Joseph and Daniel mastered *oneiromancy* in pagan courts, for the pagans placed such an importance on dreams.

After they were trained the four Jewish youths were examined by the king himself. He found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters of the land. Their faithfulness to the Word of God was therefore rewarded by God, and they were perfectly acceptable to the king. The lesson is for the faithful, those committed to obey Scripture. There is a line they will not cross, dare not cross—they will not knowingly violate God’s laws. But they had to be prepared to die if things turned out against them. But they lived.

Daniel remained their until the first year of Cyrus (539/538).

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The Second Study: Daniel Two

II. Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream:

God’s Plan for the Ages (Dan. 2:1-49)

A.

The Impotence of Babylon’s Wise Men (2:1-13)

The dream was given to the king in his second year, between April 603 and March 602.

People did not think of a dream as trivial; they thought they contained messages of the utmost importance. The king, apparently having put up with the courtiers in the past, knew this was an ominous dream, and therefore he would not tolerate their court flattery

now. He was right in the importance of the dream: it was a disclosure of God's plan for the "times of the Gentiles," the sovereignty of the major world powers of Gentiles between the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the (second) coming of the Messiah.

The passage is clear in affirming that the king knew what he dreamed, and was testing his courtiers: if they could tell him what he dreamed, he would be confident they could interpret it. Otherwise, they would be making things up again. The King James translated the clause *millēta' minni 'azda'* to say "the thing is gone from me." To do this they had to have done one of two things. One, they may have taken 'azda' to be the equivalent of a *participle* from 'azal, "to depart." This would require their changing the text some, changing the "d" to an "l," and making the short "a" to be the long "a." Two, they may have connected it to later Jewish Aramaic 'azad, "to be cut off, go apart." Whatever they did, we know that the word is a Persian word, *azda*, which means "a public notice, a promulgation." The clause could be rendered "The word has been promulgated by me," meaning, this is what I have decided to do; or it could be taken to mean "the matter is publically known by me." The NIV has "This is what I have firmly decided," clearly taking the first option, but smoothing it out a good deal as a paraphrase. He knew the dream, and was going to require the men to tell him what it was to test their interpretive abilities.

In addition to the classes of wise men that we have met before, now we also get

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the "sorcerers." The word comes from *kasaph*, "to practice sorcery." The Akkadian word is built off the Sumerian logogram which shows a sign for death inside a mouth, suggesting necromancy. We also have here include the "Chaldeans." The word *kaldu* (the Hebrew spelling archaized) was a Sumerian loan word, *GAL.DU*, which meant "master-builder," a term for a special class of soothsayers or astrologers. The Chaldeans seem to be the spokesmen for the whole group.

The change to Aramaic is at 2:4. The ending on the word, *-it*, refers to the language, as in Hebrew: 'ibri is "a Hebrew," but 'ibrit is the "Hebrew" language. Compare: 'ani 'ibri, "I am a Hebrew"; but with 'ibrit, "I speak Hebrew." So here we have 'aramit. It is the Aramaic, or also Syrian, language (Syrian or Syriac—not to be confused with Assyrian).

"O king live forever" is a wish for long life for the king, clearly the thing to say to him. Bathsheba says the same to her son Solomon (1 Kings 1:31).

"You shall be made limbs." It is possible that a horrible practice was being alluded to here. Their arms and legs would be tied to four powerful trees, temporarily roped together at the top. When the ropes were cut, the victims would be torn apart. It is also possible they would simply be hacked to pieces with axes or swords (but no word for cutting is used here). So if they did it right, they would be greatly rewarded; but if not, a terrible death awaited them.

They could not do what the king asked, and so he only accused them further of trying to gain time, hoping that the king would change his mind. In the final analysis they had to say it was impossible. But the king had thought that their gods would have revealed it to them--and so he was enraged and issued a warrant for their deaths--even the four young Hebrews.

B.

Daniel's Intercession and Offer (2:14-23)

The captain of the guard was a man named Arioch. This name appeared earlier in the

Bible, in Genesis 14 as the name of the king of Ellasar (the name appears in the Mari documents as *Arriwuk* and in Nuzi as *Ariuku*). The captain explained the dilemma to Daniel, and Daniel boldly went before the king to ask for time to interpret the dream. This prepared the drama for the Hebrew victory, for in spite of the captivity the God of Israel was the omnipotent God, sovereign over all gods and all soothsayers. This would be the dramatic revelation to Nebuchadnezzar. The only way to discover this riddle was through prayer. He and his friends pleaded for mercy (*rakh^a mim*) so that they might not be killed—and in the night the mystery (*raz*) was revealed to Daniel. The pagans had already set the stage for this event, for they had told the king that only God could do such a thing. The true God did it.

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Before Daniel returned to the king, he offered his sacrifice of praise to God for revealing the mystery. The song of praise is filled with heavy theology, fitting for the book of Daniel. It begins (2:20) with praising two attributes of God: his power (*g^e*

burta') and his wisdom (*hokm^e*

ta'). He then demonstrates the power of God by declaring his control over the events of history (2:21a), especially the reversal of fortunes that make life so unpredictable: “he changes the times and the seasons.” God determines when in history events are to take place, and how long each phase is to last. Thus, Yahweh decreed the fall and the destruction of Jerusalem and its kings (which at the time he did had not happened yet), and the rise of Babylon. But Yahweh also declared that the captivity would last for seventy years (cf. 9:2). The kings of the earth thought they had seized power by their might (a sin that David fell into by numbering his armies in pride), but only God gave them the authority. And he will remove them when the time is right and replace them with others. This praise will certainly inform the meaning of the dream. In the next line (2:21b) Daniel focused on the wisdom of God. Whatever wisdom

anyone has, it all came from God, even if they did not know it. Humans usually are filled with pride over the knowledge and wisdom they attain; but true wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD--because he gives the wisdom. Or the ability to acquire it. And no matter how intelligent some might be, the “deep and hidden things” are beyond them (2:22). So the great mysteries of life, and the future, remain hidden from the wise of this world. God knows what lies in darkness, because the light is with him. All the knowledge and wisdom of the world is as darkness compared to the wisdom and knowledge of God--it is a different as darkness and light.

Daniel closes the song with joy (2:23). He acknowledges for all time that God had

given him wisdom and power--and he would be sure to tell the king this before he interpreted the dream. And he praised God for giving him the dream and the answer. Note that he offers his praise before giving the interpretation to the king--first things first, after all. But the point to stress is that the interpretation had been given as an answer to

prayer, not from some keen insight, or natural ability. They had to pray, no matter how wise they were.

C.

Daniel's Recounting of the Dream (2:24-35).

Note that Arioch claimed a share of the glory in saying he had found someone to answer the king's dream. Arioch may not have known Daniel had asked for a stay, or perhaps he had forgotten--or perhaps Daniel had asked for the stay through a secretary of some kind. Arioch must have had confidence in Daniel (did he hear the praise), for he was willing to stake his life on this man's ability.

11

Before interpreting the dream, Daniel clarified that it was the God in heaven who gave the dreaming. This not only declared the sovereignty of Yahweh, but the worthlessness of the pagan's gods. Their gods could do nothing, but Daniel's God was showing to the king what would happen "in the days to come"--a phrase looking to the end of days, generally to the times of the Messiah.

The dream was of a colossal image, terrible and striking. It was made of four metals--the head of gold (v. 32), the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze, and the legs of iron (v. 33), with the feet mingling iron and clay. This statue then was crushed to pieces by a huge stone (v. 34), and the powder was blown away by the wind (v. 35). The stone grew in its place to become a huge mountain that filled the whole area.

Nebuchadnezzar was astonished to hear his dream rehearsed by this young Hebrew captive. He now knew that he was about to learn what it meant.

D.

The Interpretation of the Dream (2:36-47).

The interpretation presents the foreordained succession of major world powers that would dominate the region, the known world, until the kingdom of Messiah. The most likely interpretation for the four metals is that the gold is Babylon, the silver was Persia, the bronze was Greece, and the iron was Rome.

What must be observed is the **decreasing value** of the metals, from gold down to iron, and iron mixed with clay, indicating a deterioration in the wealth and value of the empires.

But

with the decreasing value there is an **increasing strength** to the metals, from gold to iron, until

the iron is mingled with clay. And these metals seem also to reflect the **nature of these empires**: gold was in abundance in Babylon, especially in the temples; silver was representative

of Persia, known among other things for its coins; bronze was common for Greek weapons and

helmets and the like, but iron was true of Rome.

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was the ideal type of government, which is why he is addressed as king of kings--yet under the authority of God. He had complete authority, and ruled

by law which could not be challenged. His city, they believed, was prepared in heaven by gods and descended to the plains of Shinar (contrast Rev. 19), He is the antithesis of the Messiah, who will have complete authority and rule by law, the law of God, but whereas Nebuchadnezzar was a proud and wicked king, Jesus will be righteous. Babylon remains in the Bible as the anti-kingdom, from Genesis 11 through Revelation. This form of it, the Neo-Babylonian Empire, ruled only from 605 to 539. The second empire was Persia—inferior to Babylon, perhaps because the king did not have the authority that the Babylonian kings did. It was supreme, however, for nearly two centuries, which made it stronger than Babylon. The kings spent a good deal of their time off in Asia and the Aegean fighting Greeks.

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The third empire was Greece, beginning with the conquests of Alexander who crushed Persia in 333. The Greek empire was divided at the death of Alexander among his four generals, and they maintained regional power only until Rome began annexing the lands in 190 B.C. As a Republic Rome was considered inferior to the powerful and extravagant monarchies of antiquity, but as the iron empire it was able to crush every other nation. Rome reached its great extent in the time of Trajan (98-117) when the empire extended through ancient Assyria and into Rumania. The last stage of the Roman or Iron Empire is characterized by clay. With the ten toes and the clay as the symbols, the text indicates that the last stages of the Roman world will be characterized by a loose federation rather than a single realm; this coincides with the ten horns of later visions. The iron may represent the remains of the old Roman culture, and the clay its inherent weaknesses. The mixture of iron and clay suggest confusion and coming destruction. Iron and clay may co-exist, but they can never combine to form one substance. Some have suggested that the third empire was Alexander's, which lasted only 12 years, and that the fourth kingdom was the separate parts of his empire, which eventually led to this federation among his generals to form the Seleucids and Ptolemies. But that does not fit the text well, for the fourth empire is supposed to be the strongest of them all. Whatever remains of the Roman federation will be destroyed at the end of the age. Verses 44 and 45 depict the final scene. The "Rock" cut out of the mountain without hands rolls down and destroys not just the last empire, but all of the empires of the world (what Satan tried to give Christ at the temptation), reducing them to dust which is blown away. The Babylonians pictured the earth as huge cosmic mountain, called "mountain-House." And so out of that setting this Rock comes. In contrast to those kingdoms that lasted a century or two or more each, this one will last forever. There is not doubt from the context, from the use of "rock" in post-exilic writers, and from the parallel in chapter seven, that this is the coming kingdom of God, ruled over by Christ Jesus. It will last forever, both in its earthly form and then its eternal form (on the new earth and in the new heavens) when Christ delivers the

kingdom up to the Father. We shall return to this when we talk about the beasts out of the sea in

Daniel seven and the culmination in our Lord—the Son of Man.

Daniel closed the interpretation with a clear word of the sovereignty of God over the wisdom of the world and the affairs of man. The king could only acknowledge that Yahweh was

the “God of gods.” This does not mean that he had a conversion, or that he denied Marduk. He

was used to court flattery, and found it easy to laud this god on this day. But he did acknowledge that, and as a token he bowed to Daniel—an amazing scene. The other wise men were no doubt jealous—but they were also glad to be alive.

E. The Promotion of Daniel and His Friends (2:48-49)

Because of his success, Daniel was put as head of all the magicians and wise men of the realm. He became “chief of appointed officials.” The king also loaded him with gifts and honors. He also made him the civil head of the capital province of

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Babylon, which was the highest post under the king. Normally a member of the “master race” would get this post, and so for a Jew from a small state in the west to get this speaks of how much Daniel’s wisdom impressed the king. But Daniel knew it was all of the Lord’s doing.

The Third Study: Daniel Three

III. The Golden Image and the Fiery Furnace (Dan. 3:1-30)

A.

The Erection of the State Image (1-3)

The king missed the point of the dream vision that God would finally destroy all these idolatrous nations. Instead, he thought only of the head of gold—Babylon, and decided to force a **state religion** on all the people. The central government of Babylon, and the god of the Babylonians, would thus be required of everyone. Here we see a glimpse again of why in the Bible **Babylon** came to represent the **anti-kingdom**, the world system opposed to the true God. That religion would center on the worship of Nebo, and if Nebo was worshiped, his chief servant would be obeyed, one *Nabu-kudurri-utsur*, the king. Failure to bow down to the statue would therefore be treason as well as impiety. This act reveals that the king’s praise of Yahweh in the last chapter was rather superficial, short-lived at best. And yet, to this pagan king, the exaltation of one deity on one occasion did not mean he was denying the others. But he certainly would have denied the uniqueness of Yahweh to the exclusion of other gods. It is highly unlikely that the king had enough gold to make such a huge statue out

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of solid gold. It probably was covered with gold—no small expense there either. The king wished to show immediately that he was the head of gold, that his empire was more glorious and valuable than all the others. And he probably thought this was a small thing to ask his subjects to do to pledge loyalty.

We have a number of officials here that indicate a thorough organization of the government offices. The first are the **satraps**, an old Persian word *khshatrapawan* for “realm protector.” The *signayya*’ (“one who is appointed”) were **prefects**, perhaps

military commanders, or lieutenant governors. The *pahewata'* were local **governors** (as Mal. 1:8) indicates. The Persian *andarsaghar* is a “**counsel-giver**.” The fifth group are “**treasurers**,” *gedaberayya'*. The old Persian word *databara* next came to mean “**judges**.” Then *tiptaye'* were “**magistrates**.” And finally, the “**provincial officials**,” or *shiltone*. The fact that five of these words are Persian in origin may indicate that the account of this chapter at least was written down at the end of Daniel’s life when Persia was in power, perhaps around 532 B.C. And, by the second century most of the Persian words had become obsolete, indicating that it would be unlikely for this story to have been written later in the Maccabean period (160 B.C.).

B.

The Institution of the State Religion (3:4-7)

We have some interesting words in this section. The first is the word “**herald**,” which is clearly a Greek word, related to *kerusso* and *kerux*. Then, out of the list of musical instruments, we have a number that have Greek names (*kitharis*, *psalterion*, *symphonia*). Edwin Yamauchi has a book on Greece and Babylon in which he shows that there was trade between the Aegean and the Mesopotamian regions as early as 3000 B.C. It would be unusual if there were no borrowing of words, especially of names of products.

The decree of the king here in Daniel 3 makes the reader think of the corresponding passage in Revelation 13:11-18, which uses motifs from this chapter in Daniel: the final “Babylonian” dictator will try to force idolatry on everyone, imposing the threat of death for disobedience. The saints are in both cases called on to resist the pagan world power, risking their physical lives that they might be delivered from eternal death (Rev. 14:9-11). *Note: The world always tries to replace the true faith with their man-made religions, forcing the faithful to take a stand.*

C.

The Accusation and Trial of God’s Faithful Witnesses (8-18)

The three young men were accused of resisting. But where was Daniel? It is unlikely that he was bowing down when they were not. More likely, he was involved with running the government and was not called on to submit; he may even been away or busy at the time with state matters. If the story had been written in the Maccabean period, Daniel would not have been left out.

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The malicious informers were the “Chaldeans,” here an ethnic label and not a reference to soothsayers. Apparently the upper class of Babylonians were the Chaldeans, and among them were some magicians. Their hatred and envy of the Jews is clear in that they rush in and accuse the three “Jewish noblemen” of disobeying the king. These accusers had an expressed zeal for the king as they reminded him of the law he ordained (which he may not have fully read).

The three Hebrews did not obey, even when given a second chance. They simply declared to the king that “our God is able to deliver us” from the fiery furnace and from the king. The first part may be translated, “But if our God exists.” And yet the men were not presumptuous: “But if not” –if God did not deliver them, they still would not bow down to this statue. They were courteous, but determined to refuse. And the king had certainly defied the LORD–“what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” So the image was bad enough, a violation of the Decalogue; but the denunciation of other gods was a challenge. Because he refused to give God the glory, this king was going to endure one humiliation after another until he groveled in the dust before the God of

Israel. *Note: if you defy the law of the land because of your commitment to the Lord, be prepared to lay down your life for it if need be.*

E.

The Sentence Imposed and Executed and Overruled (19-27)

Because the Jews publicly challenged the king's authority, he had no choice but to put them to death—his authority would have been weakened. Filled with burning rage, he increased the burning rage of the furnace, so that even workers were consumed by the fire. Mesopotamian smelting furnaces were in the shape of an old glass milk bottle, with a lower opening to put fuel on the fire, and an upper opening for inserting the ore to be heated. The three men in the furnace were therefore visible to the king.

The king was amazed to see the men walking around unbound, and a fourth man with them, one like the son of God. The context around "God" indicates that he was referring to one true god (even if among many). All four persons were walking about in the fire and were not hurt in any way. This was a clear miracle that the true God performed--they all saw it. In Daniel this person is the divine Son, what we call a pre-incarnate appearance.

F.

The king's second submission (28-30)

The king had to acknowledge his defeat, and so he recognized the God of the Hebrews as the one true living God. He had challenged that no god could do this; but the God of the Hebrews used the occasion to reduce this king to submission. If the people of God remain faithful to God, putting him first in everything, then he will take care of them in this world. The Law said that only Yahweh could be worshiped and glorified.

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The Fourth Study: Daniel Four

IV. Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream and Humiliation

(4:1-27)

A.

The Circumstances of the Dream (1-7)

The text joins the first few verses with chapter 3; they make good sense leading up to the events of the fourth chapter. It does, of course, fit with the conclusion of chapter three; but it also

fit as the introduction to the crisis on this chapter. It harmonizes with the uniqueness of this fourth chapter, and that uniqueness is that this is the only chapter of the Bible written under the

supervision of a pagan king. Daniel, as the vizier, probably framed the wording of the section.

In the process, the king speaks of the sovereignty of the one true and living God. The little section is written in the form of a decree to the nation; it expresses the king's gratitude to the God of heaven for his signs to the king, and praises the heavenly kingdom as an eternal kingdom.

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The words indicate that the king was a first hand witness to the marvelous signs of the LORD's

intervention. He is in effect expressing the main theology of the book, namely, that God alone

is the source of all power in the affairs of man and in the world at large, and that neither he nor any other ruler had any power except by God's permission.

Verses 4 and 5 point to a time of ease when the king had vanquished all his enemies and could enjoy leisure. It may be that the events of this chapter took place some eight or nine years

before the end of the siege of Tyre in 573 B.C., or 571 according to Saggs (See H. W. F. Saggs,

The Greatness that Was Babylon, p. 148). See also Ezekiel 26:7 which foretold this event.

The

point is that this would allow for a seven year period of mental illness, during which no major military operations occurred—from 582--575. Nebuchadnezzar may have had this dream in

583

B.C.

According to verses 6 and 7 the king sent for all his magicians, but they could do nothing. He then sent for Daniel, the chief of the group. Why did he not send for Daniel at the outset? Was he wanting to give his own wise men a chance to do what Daniel had done? Whatever the reason, it failed, and he had to send for the Jew.

B.

The Description of the Dream (8-18)

Daniel is called by his official court name Belteshazzar, "protect his life." The king says that he was named after his god, and so we may assume a prefix was on the front of the name, making a form like "Bel-belteshazzar," "Bel, protect his life," or perhaps Nebo/Nabu. But the king declared that Daniel was inspired by God (or the gods) and was not afraid of any mystery. "The spirit of the holy God(s) is in him" uses a true plural, and not as in Hebrew a special plural for a singular God, such as a plural of majesty. The king is a pagan still, and perhaps thinks in terms of multiple gods. But he would agree that Daniel had genuine communication with the high god.

The content of the dream was the growth and then destruction of a mighty tree.

Trees are taken for granted in the West; but in the dry Middle East a tree is valuable, not only for what it produces, but what it signifies is present—water. The water table will be high enough in such a place for the tree to grow. And to the pagans, this had to mean the presence of the deity. The tradition of the tree bearing fruit, and the water to sustain it, may be traced back to "Paradise" (a Persian term for the innermost garden of the god). In the Assyrian and Babylonian *bas-reliefs* the tree in the garden was the symbol of divine presence and provision for life. Hence, the tree was used for the kingdom of God over which the king ruled. Likewise in Israel the tree was a symbol of the nation, God's theocratic kingdom, from the burning bush to the fig tree that Jesus cursed. But it is Isaiah who is the clearest—the nation is a tree, but in the captivity God cut down the tree, leaving only a stump, which Isaiah says is the holy seed, the remnant (Isa. 6). And in the future out of this stump will grow a little shoot, a branch, which will fill the earth and become the kingdom of God. Here we have similar motifs—Babylon is a tree that is the center of the earth, that provides food and shade for all, but that will be

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cut down and destroyed. And its demise will make way for the next empire.

The first part of the dream is happy—a beautiful tree, lots of leaves and fruit, animals under the shade of the tree, birds in the branches, a true indication of the greatness of Babylon. But then the image of the dream is destroyed. Judgment will

cut it down, cut off the branches, shake off the leaves, and blow away the fruit. This judgment is announced by an angel, called here a “**watchman**.” The verb means “to be wakeful, be on the watch.” Here two words form a *hendiadys* (one idea through two words—as in our English language we have things like “I am good and mad”): “a watchman and a holy one” means “a holy watchman.” This is the only biblical use of it; it does show up in Qumran’s Dead Sea Scrolls, where it is also a term for an angel. The context indicates this kind of angel has some involvement with executing divine decrees of judgment, notably their pronouncement at the right time to the right person. Here the tree was destroyed—except for the stump, which was to be encircled with bands of iron and bronze in the grassy meadow. The announcement continues with the word from God saying that the “mind of the stump” had to be changed to that of a brute beast. The person this tree stump represented had to be turned into an animal—for seven appointed times, or, in this context, seven years. The portrayal of a man in his great pride as a lofty tree is found elsewhere in the Bible: Isaiah 2:12-13; 10:34. Ezekiel

also used it for the Assyrian (Ezek. 31:13-17). The Bible also underscores the theme of this section that God brings down the proud and exalts the lowly; see Job 5:11 and 1 Samuel 2:7-8.

Verses 17 and 18 give us the reason for this judgment on the king: the sovereignty of the Most High be demonstrated to the whole world, and that people would acknowledge that kings have power only by this God’s permission.

C.

Daniel’s Interpretation (19-27)

It would have been difficult for Daniel to tell the king this interpretation—that his kingdom was going to be wiped out. The text says that Daniel was stupefied for one hour. This king had treated Daniel with great respect, and the kingdom was indeed glorious. But, the dream was clear—it would end suddenly. The tree was Nebuchadnezzar and his empire, stretching from Egypt in the west to Elam in the east. They certainly knew of peoples living beyond the borders of their empire, such as in India and China, but they were outside the Mesopotamian world, outside of culture and the Babylonian empire. The “distant parts of the earth” referred to the edge of the empire.

Finally Daniel came to the point: the king was not only going to lose his power, but also his sanity. He would be reduced to the mentality of a beast for seven years (see R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, for a description of the disease in Daniel’s prophecy). The king still had to learn that the one true God, the one that Daniel served, was the God to whom he was accountable. In addition to the classical references to the king’s disease, we now have the fragment of a prayer attributed to Nabonaid from Qumran, Cave 4 (see J. T. Milik in *Revue Biblique*, 63, 1956, p. 408).

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The prayer is of the king who says that he was smitten for seven years by the Most High God so that he had a terrible skin disease—until he confessed his sins and was restored when to give glory to God. There are several differences between that text and Daniel 4, which show the fragment to be late and legendary—but a later, garbled tradition of the illness of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

The fact that a stump is bound up and preserved means that Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom will be preserved for him. Normally, if this long illness happened to any king, he would have been replaced right away. But apparently next in line, the prince

Evil-merodach (“a man of Marduk”), was not ready or able to rule at this time. The promise that Nebuchadnezzar would be restored in seven years would have seemed unlikely—but it was fulfilled.

So Daniel advised the king that if he abandoned his hubris and despotism, and gave God the glory and recognize that he was subject to God’s moral law, this judgment might be deferred. This was very dangerous for Daniel to say—it could have cost him his life if he had not already been of value to the king. Daniel advised the king to examine his life in the light of God’s laws, and to do something for the poor and the oppressed. The one year delay in the judgment shows that the king must have made some attempt to comply.

D.

The King’s Punishment (4:28-33)

If the king did attempt to make changes, it did not change his lofty opinion of himself. He took credit for all his achievements and never gave the credit to God. This is so typical of the wealthy and the powerful, who feel they have achieved what they have by their own wit and wisdom and effort. The king admired all that he had done in beautifying the city—and his works were impressive. This king did build a great city. The immense Ishtar Gates were his, even the enameled brick facing. He built or rebuilt about twenty

temples in Babylon and Borsippa. He also made huge fortifications, shipping docks, and processional ways marked by wall carvings dragons and bulls in different colors. In his inscriptions he wrote that Marduk, the god of Babylon, was king of the gods, had created everything, and had given him this city. The city had been made in heaven and descended to the

land of Shinar. The writings give no reference at all to Yahweh; even though he praises Marduk,

he claims all the credit for building this city and this empire.

His rooftop bragging comes to a complete halt when after a year he received an unexpected word from the LORD announcing his kingship was taken from him (v. 31). For that

year he had been happy to avoid judgment for his ways, even though he had not expressed the majesty of the Yahweh. Now he would have to. His animal existence would be his life for seven years—until he would know and acknowledge the sovereignty of Daniel’s God. From the

dream image, the fiery furnace, and now this, the king would have no reason not to give the praise to God in heaven. No reason except his pride. But seven years of *boanthropy* would address his arrogance. The sign that the Lord was doing this was that after seven years he

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would be restored—his kingdom would be preserved for him.

E.

The King’s Repentance (34-37)

At the end of the seven years the king was all but destroyed, as the LORD had promised. When this miserable man lifted his eyes to heaven, God in his grace restored his sanity and his kingdom. To his credit, the king remembered Daniel’s words and did not show any resentment towards him or God, but prostrated himself before Yahweh, the God of heaven. He now knew that he was powerless before this God, and that everything he had came from him. So his first response was

(1) praise and honor given to the **Majesty on High**, the ever living God. It looks as if

this king was beginning to realize that only by entering into a proper relationship with the one God of heaven could he have a meaningful life. His second response was to (2) acknowledge the sovereign kingship of the God of heaven over all kingdoms on earth.

The

only enduring kingdom was God's, and it was the source of all power. Third, the king (3) admitted that he and all mankind are nothing before God. Without God, all humanity is devoid of meaning and regarded as nothing (see Isaiah 40). At last he knew that utter dependence on the God of heaven was the only way to life, here and in the future.

(4) Finally, he also acknowledged that the absolute sovereignty of God is beyond the control of

any mortal or any force of nature. The head of gold finally bowed to the God of Heaven. The incident would have been so encouraging for the Israelite captives: There God was still alive and well, and he was able to bring the proud king to his knees. They now knew that whatever power Nebuchadnezzar had was under the complete control of Yahweh. In these progressively

more intense statements by the king, we see a change. It could very well be that Nebuchadnezzar

finally came to faith in the LORD.

Each episode in the first six chapters of the book closes with the point that Yahweh is sovereign over the nations and able to crush the pride of the captors.

The Fifth Study: Daniel Five

V. Belshazzar's (Babylon's) Doom (5:1-31)

"The writing on the wall" has become proverbial for any foresight or prior awareness of impending disaster; and although the expression may be well known, the passage from which it comes is not. This portion of Daniel provides a declaration of the judgment on Babylon by divine revelation in a unique format, the writing on the wall. The announcement comes in fulfillment of previous prophecies that God was going to

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destroy Babylon (not only in Daniel 2, but in other prophets such as Habakkuk). But God's timing is perfect. He had predicted that his people Israel would be in captivity for 70 years—it is now 539 B.C., just three years short of the fulfillment of the promise to re-gather the people to their land. And, his judgment was just, because Babylon had deteriorated over the decades until it was on the verge of ruin by its corruption and debauchery, represented by the feast. When we pick up with this chapter, time has passed: Nebuchadnezzar, the proud king who did acknowledge the sovereignty and Lordship of the true God, has long since died. Instead, this fool Belshazzar is occupying the throne. Daniel is now a good deal older, a senior statesman perhaps almost in his eighties.

Historical Setting

Nebuchadnezzar died in 563 B.C. He was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach (*Amel/awil Marduk*, "a man of Marduk"), who nonetheless released the Jewish king Jehoiachin from prison and treated him as a king (2 Kings 25:27-30—in the book of 2 Kings this is a final word of hope: the Davidic king still lives, the line is not extinct!). Two years later the Babylonian king was assassinated by his brother-in-law Neriglissar (*Nergal-shar-utsur*, "Nergal, protect the king"), who had served under Nebuchadnezzar at the fall of Jerusalem. But this general also died just four years later, and his son Labashi-Marduk who succeeded him was murdered nine months later (556). The revolutionaries placed their leader on the throne—**Nabonidus** (*Nabu-na'id*, "Nebo is

exalted”). He was not related to the family by royal blood, and so married one of Nebuchadnezzar’s daughters to make his hold on the throne secure. Nabonidus was probably of the merchant class, wealthy, powerful, business related, who had the support of commercial leaders. He was a devotee of the moon god Sin, and the son of a high priestess of that faith. He was intensely interested in the history and archaeology of Mesopotamia, and so went off in pursuit of ruins to rebuild. He focused a good deal of attention on North Arabia and Edom, probably for the commercial trade routes. During the last ten years of his life he was in Teima most of the time, and left the kingdom to his son **Belshazzar**, a situation that lasted til the kingdom was destroyed.

Nabonidus had supported the revolt of Cyrus of Anshan against his father-in-law Astyages, king of Media. But when Cyrus established his powerful kingdom with great speed, he attacked the Lydian kingdom of Asia Minor (in western Turkey), with whom Nabonidus had been an ally. So Cyrus eventually turned to deal with Nabonidus. The Babylonian Chronicles are clear. The Medio-Persian troops defeated the Babylonians near Opis on the Tigres. The inhabitants of Akkad, part of the Babylonian empire, revolted, and so Nabonidus massacred them all. A few days later, the 15th day of the month, Cyrus took Sippar without battle—and Nabonidus who had been the field general fled, leaving his son to protect Babylon. But on the next day Gobryas (Gubaru), the

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governor with the army of Persia, entered Babylon without a battle.

The city was considered impregnable. The walls around the huge city were 330 feet high and had 100 fortified gates. The city walls had not be broken through in a thousand years—it would take clever planning for the Persians to break through.

If the Babylonian Chronicle is correct about the date, then Belshazzar’s feast would have taken place the 15th of Tishri, sometime in September, 539. While they were celebrating, Gubaru had diverted the waters of the Euphrates to an old canal, reducing the water level to below the gates. The Persians could wade through the water and come up in the city before the king’s party would know it.

It is this Gubaru that Daniel calls “Darius.” “Darius” is a royal title, like “Caesar,” and could be applied to rulers at different levels. “Darius” cannot possibly refer to Darius I, for he did not reign until 522 B.C., long after the fall of Babylon.

What is amazing is that Belshazzar was having this drunken feast while the war was going badly and the enemy was at the gate. Was he ignorant of all that; was he living in naive foolishness; or was this confidence? Whatever it was, it is hardly where you expect a ruler to be

when the nation is about to be overthrown. Overthrown— without a fight, because there was a fifth column in Babylon who hated their rulers and eagerly welcomed the Persian liberators (this

has an all too familiar ring to it in the ongoing conflict between Babylon/Iraq and Persia/Iran).

A.

Profaning the Holy Vessels (1-4)

The king and his guests were having a drunken feast, and in his bravado decides to taunt the God of one of the defeated peoples, Judeans. The holy vessels had been vaulted away for 47

years, but he calls for them and uses them in his feast. Once again an arrogant, proud Babylonian

ruler taunted the God of Israel and praised his own (false gods). God will not relinquish his glory.

B.

The Handwriting on the Wall (5-16)

Just four words were mysteriously written on the wall, in a supernatural way. They were all terrified and everything ceased in their revelry. No one could read them, although the letters

were standard Aramaic. Perhaps in the way that they were written, or just their significance, confounded the wise men. Once again the wisdom of the world had to yield to divine revelation.

Even wealth and third place in the kingdom could not inspire the pagans' understanding. It was the Queen Mother's memory that brought Daniel in (he has not been heard of for a long time, and is now 81). Belshazzar may have heard of him, but did not know him. The Queen

Mother, probably a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, did remember him (apparently Nabonidus married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar to make his reign legitimate, so Nebuchadnezzar was a grandfather).

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C.

Daniel's Interpretation (17-31)

Daniel knew the promised rewards were short-lived, since the message was the imminent collapse of the empire. Daniel first gave a short homily before the interpretation, essentially rehearsing how puny mortals try to challenge the God of heaven. Now the king was guilty of blasphemy and profanation, and that sealed his doom.

The words on the wall were in Aramaic script: MENE MENE TEKEL U-PHARSIN .

The Aramaic letters may have been written up and down, or some other way; they may have been in the old script (only a little different). But there were no vowels. The words could be names of coins. *Mene* can mean "counted out" or a "mina," *Tekel* is a coin, a "shekel"; but it can mean "weighed." The third word, *Parsin*, means either "half-shekel" or "divided." The letters of the third word also fit the name "Persia," providing a third meaning. The point is that

God the Judge of the whole world had numbered the days of the empire, weighed its value, and

divided it from them and given to the Medes and Persians.

And so that very night the Persian army took Babylon, bringing to an end the greatness that was Babylon. As he promised to Habakkuk, God would use the Babylonians to punish Israel, but then he would deal with Babylon—they all had to share the responsibility of what they did to Israel.

The Sixth Study: Daniel Six

VI. By Faith, Shut the Mouths of Lions (6:1-28)

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The point of this passage is to record how the LORD demonstrated his sovereignty to the new regime, the Medes and Persians, so that they too would learn

that God's plans for his people cannot be set aside by kings, or by satraps with their false accusations. God honors those who remain true to their faith in spite of possible dangers.

A.

The Conspiracy Against Daniel (1-9)

Cyrus was the king, but Darius was his vice-regent in Babylon (see 6:28). Darius the Mede was 62 years old when he began to govern (so this is not Darius the Great, who began to reign in 522 at the age of 28). The title is *Darayavahush*, "the royal one." And so Daniel lived to see the "head of gold" replaced by the next kingdom, Persia. It is understandable that the new rulers were loyal Persians, but Daniel was also selected by the ruler to be chairman over them, no doubt for his faithful interpretation of the writing that deposed Belshazzar—not to mention doing what no other wise man could do. It is likely that the king, Cyrus, had already written the decree to send the Jews home (see Ezra 1:1, the "first year of Cyrus," 539,8). So Daniel was a valued official for a number of reasons.

But the other leaders did not like it—he was a Jew. The Jews were an inferior race, captives. And so they sought some reason to have him deposed. But there was nothing—except in his religion, as they saw it. So they came thronging into the court ("thronging" is the same word found in Psalm 2, "why do the nations *rage*?"). They managed to get a binding law passed, probably appealing to the king's vanity. A law of the Medes and Persians cannot be changed. By the way, they lied to the king, saying the decision was unanimous. Daniel was not part of it.

The point is that the world, even in this peaceful and hopeful time for Israel, hates the people of God and would destroy them, or their leaders.

B.

The Detection and Sentence of Daniel (10-17)

In this section we see the faith and faithfulness of Daniel. He could have hidden for 30 days, or prayed secretly, but that was not Daniel. He had no reason to compromise a lifetime of faith. It was his faith that had preserved him from the corrupting influences of the kingdom. So, as was his custom, he prayed looking to Jerusalem.

Why? Well, for one reason, the holy city was the place of the temple, which Solomon said was a house of prayer, and people would look to it and pray (1 Kings 8). But Daniel 9 tells us that Daniel was studying the times to see when the return should be, for 70 years was now just about up. This seems to have informed much of his prayer. Note: Prayer is taking the promises of God and turning them into reality by faith.

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The enemies have the new law on their side, and Daniel had to be sentenced to the lions. These kings kept lions in abundance, for their sport usually, but also for these other reasons. The enemies did not anticipate the king's response—he was grieved for Daniel, his most trusted official. Also, for the first time the real reason for the decree dawned on him, and he was angry. The only hope now was for a miracle.

At night Daniel, who may have been around 83 now, was thrown into the den.

The king's words were full of hope, more than faith: "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you." Then they sealed the doors with their cylinder seals, and left him to the lions.

C.

Daniel's Deliverance and Vindication (18-24)

The king could not sleep, probably from concern and from anger over being manipulated into a foolish and unnecessary. But in the morning he went immediately to Daniel and called out. Daniel's answer (21, 22) was honoring to the king and glorifying to God—God had sent his angel, no doubt the Angel of the LORD (the Lord himself) and shut the lion's mouths. Daniel also made it clear that this vindicated him as guiltless. Then the king, without trial or decree—remember he is an absolute monarch—had the culprits and their families thrown to the lions. This seems excessive to us, but in those days one does not trick the king and get away with it. Why the families too? Well, probably he was concerned that some might seek revenge in the future. So the lions now crushed all these people before they hit the floor.

D.

Darius' Testimony to God's Sovereignty (25-28)

Once again a pagan king is compelled by the supernatural intervention of the LORD to declare the glory of the LORD. We do not know much about this Darius' faith, but his words certainly declare the sovereignty of Daniel's God.

His words make three very good points:

1) Daniel's God is alive and shows that he lives by the way he acts in history, responding like a real person to the injustice shown to his faithful servant.

2)

God's rule is eternal and will never pass away, even though the Hebrew monarchy did not survive its idolatrous age.

3)

God miraculously delivers his faithful worshipers when they pray to him, performing wonders in heaven and on earth.

So Daniel continued to serve in the third year of Cyrus, perhaps putting his visions and

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messages together by 532 B.C.

The Seventh Study: Daniel Seven

VII. The Triumph of the Son of Man (7:1-28)

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We now leave the historical events in the life of Daniel to focus on some of the visions and prophecies that he had. Persia destroyed Babylon in 539, and Daniel was accused and thrown to the lions a few years later—that was chapter 6. But now we have a prophecy that Daniel had received in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, or, 556 or 555 B.C.

Chapter 7 parallels chapter 2, for both set forth the four major world powers which will be overthrown by the kingdom of God at the end of the ages. But whereas that was a statue that the king of Babylon saw in a dream, this is a dream that Daniel had, and it is of beasts out of the sea.

A.

The Four Beasts

In his dream Daniel saw four terrifying beasts out of the sea. The sea in prophecy represents turbulent humanity, the ever-changing Gentile world. And these beasts were churned up by four winds from heaven, which are four mighty angels (Rev. 7:1). The four winds represent God's judgments on the earth, using cruel and beastly kingdoms

(see Rev. 9:14).

1. The Winged Lion. This corresponds to the head of gold, that is, Babylon.

The lion was symbolic of Babylon; it was carved in the bricks, the walls, the pavements, and the buildings. But here it has wings, to signify its swiftness and power. But the wings are soon plucked so that it is confined to the ground; the plucking of the wings refers to Neuchadnezzar's humbling and his reduction of pride and destruction. It was finally given the heart of a man, a humanizing effect, perhaps referring to the change of heart in the king when restored to sanity.

2. The Hulking Bear. The second beast displaces the first without any mention of conflict between them. This is Media-Persia that took over. The bear has three ribs in its mouth, signifying the three powers the bear did consume, or subsume: the kingdom of Lydia (in Turkey), the Chaldean Empire (Babylon), and Egypt.

3. The Four-winged Leopard with Four Heads. The fourth beast is more terrifying than the previous two. It is a leopard, but it has four wings and four heads. This is Greece, the kingdom of Alexander, won by swift battle, so swift that Persia collapsed under the immediate onslaught of Greece. The kingdom was quadripartite, and at the death of Alexander was divided into four kingdoms: Greece and Macedon (under Antipater and then Cassander), Thrace and Asia Minor (under Lysimachus), Asia and Palestine (under Seleucus), and Egypt (under Ptolemy).

4. The Fourth Terrifying Beast. This beast is unlike any known predator before it. It is terrifying for its power and cruelty; it is Rome. It has teeth of iron, which is the image of iron on the statue. It conquered the world by trampling under foot

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everything that was left from earlier kingdoms. But this beast also has ten horns (two antlers of five horns), which clearly match the ten toes of the statue. The power—and eventual weakness—is that this empire in its final form is a confederation of ten states that made up the Roman Empire. So the vision of this beast stretches beyond the immediacy of the unified empire.

5. The Little Horn.

There is a new feature here: the emergence of a small horn that becomes dominant by uprooting three other horns and subjecting the other six. This “little horn” has human eyes and a mouth that speaks arrogant things, so a king and not an empire. This one will be described in Scripture as a ruthless world dictator, the man of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:3, 8) who proclaims himself to be god (2 Thess 2:4).

HORN: The Old Testament uses the image of a horn from the animal world to represent a king. One can think of the animal with the largest horn (as in a big-horn animal) driving off all challengers and keeping his dominant place. The image of “horn” then refers to the powerful king who can put down all challenges to his reign. Even the Messiah is called a horn in Scripture (see the ending of Psalm 132 for one place).

B.

The Kingdom of God under the Reign of the Messiah.

Daniel now sees a vision of the heavenly throne of God in all its blazing glory. He is described as the “Ancient of Days” because he is the everlasting God (not because he is old and feeble). All the blazing fire represents judgment and wrath, because the vision is of imminent judgment. Millions of angels are seen waiting for his word. And in the vision Daniel sees that the beast was slain; the other beasts were stripped of power

but allowed to live a little longer. This is the judgment on the beast described at length in Revelation 13 and 19.

But Daniel sees one like the **Son of Man** coming in the clouds. He is not a beast, but human, and humane; but he is not a mere mortal, because he comes from heaven. This is a vision of the glorified Christ, fully human and fully divine. When the Father tells him to “Ask of me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance” (Ps. 2:7-9), then he again brings his first born into the world (Hebrews 1). Coming in clouds means judgment. But he is given the kingdom by the Father, all its power and glory, so that he will rule for ever. But he is not just a king; he is a divine king, for people will worship him as well. Jesus said, when challenged by Caiaphas, that this was yet in the future (When he told Caiaphas that he was the Messiah, Jesus added to his answer with this passage, that henceforth he would see the Son of Man coming in clouds—to judge the world. In other words, Caiaphas might be judging Jesus this day, but the next time Caiaphas sees Jesus, Jesus will be his judge).

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The final chapter of human history will be written when Christ comes again to judge the world, destroy the beast, establish a reign of righteousness and peace, showing what God had intended from the beginning. Revelation says it will last a thousand years. Then, Paul tells the Corinthians, Christ will deliver the kingdom up to the Father so that God may be all in all (and this we call the “eternal state”). God will not let his plan and his work crumble because of Satan’s devices. He will rescue his creation, redeem it, and bring his plan to pass, to have a glorious race living righteously under the divine rule of the Son.

A little note is in order here. The early Church knew that the promises of the Messiah would be ultimately fulfilled only at the second coming and only on earth in the reign of Christ, even though they could call him there king now. But in the third century some of the allegorical teachings of certain Church fathers decided not to take it literally, but as referring to the Church and not a coming kingdom. This has come to be known as replacement theology—the Church has become the promised kingdom, replacing the Jews who rejected the King. This view caught on, with disastrous results. If the Church was the kingdom (and no future kingdom was coming), then the Church had to be infallible, and so it claimed to be infallible. Then it took to itself temporal powers, ruling over kings in the holy Roman empire. This led to the foolish pursuit of the Crusades that occupied several centuries (to no lasting value). It also brought in the Inquisition. And most tragically, it led to the slaughter of Jews, starting very early and carried on for centuries, country by country, until the culmination in the holocaust. They just could not figure out what to do about the Jews if the Church fulfilled the promises of the Kingdom. But Daniel makes it clear: at the second coming of Jesus, when he comes in clouds with great glory (not the first coming) he will come to claim his kingdom and put down all evil. This has not happened yet. And so we pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

C.

The Interpretation by the Angel

Daniel was troubled, especially by the little horn, and so the Angel added more revelation. This is the “lawless one” (2 Thess 2:8,9) and the beast (Rev. 13:1-10). He will rise to power at the end of the age of human history as we know it, and fall to divine judgment at the second coming of the Son of Man. So in v 23 the angel is speaking of the federation of states in the future; the vision jumps from the Roman Empire in its historic state to its ultimate ten-horn phase in a renewed empire. He will bring economic

pressure on people to submit to his authority (Rev. 13:16, 17), so that persecution of believers will characterize his reign. He will revise the calendar, and worship. The radical part of his reign will last “a time, times, and half a time,” or, three and a half years, or the latter half of Daniel’s 70th “week” (we will come back to this in chapter 9). During that time the progressively devastating judgments of God portrayed in Revelation 14-19 will be poured out, leading up to the second coming. None of this can refer only to the historic Roman Empire, because that did not end with the second coming.

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The Son of Man will destroy this and all world powers. The fact that the followers of the Son are also called the saints of the Most High shows that the Son is to be equated with the Most High.

All of this had an overwhelming effect on Daniel.

The Eighth Study: Daniel Eight

VIII. The Ram, the He-Goat, and Another Little Horn (8:1-27)

Daniel 8 is so precise, so accurate, in its predictions that people have a hard time thinking of it as prophecy (that is, people who do not believe prophecy can be so specific), and so they suggest a late date for the book, to make this historical reflection instead. But if it were that, we

would have expected even more precision. No, this was not written later after the fact; it is a vision Daniel had in the 3rd

year of Belshazzar, before the events in Daniel 5 when Babylon was still the empire (by the way, if you take the late date for the book then this verse is a flat lie).
A.

The Vision of the Ram, the He-Goat, and the Little Horn (1-12).

1. The Ram. Daniel went to Susa for some reason, which was the capital of Elam (or the setting of the dream was in Susa). The vision was not about Babylon—it would soon be gone. This is a vision of Media-Persia in the symbol of a ram. One of the horns of the animal grew larger; this refers to the domination of Persia over the other kingdoms in the region. Persia conquered in the south (Babylon), the north (Caucasus and Scythians) and the west (Lydia, Ionia, Thrace, Macedon). These places were helpless against the swift ram—Cyrus had everything his way rather easily. The Persian power remained until Greece began to defeat them.

2. The One-Horned Goat. The disaster of Persia came in the form of this goat with a big horn that came from the west, from Macedonia and Greece (Alexander’s victory at the Battle of Granicus in 334). The goat moves so fast his hooves barely touch the ground as he charges all the way to the eastern borders of the Persian empire. The invading army is under the leadership of one man (the horn). Alexander’s swift conquest of three years is unparalleled in military history. But he got carried away with his own importance, requiring his comrades to prostrate themselves before him, and even had his image put on the walls of the temples of Egypt with their gods.

But at the height of his power the large horn is broken off. Alexander died. Then, in place of the large horn, four prominent horns grew up. These are the four kingdoms that divided up Alexander’s kingdom during the third century B.C.

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Then, verses 9-11 speak of a little horn from the midst of these four horns. Please note, this is not the same as the little horn of the last chapter, for that little horn grew up from the ten horns of the fourth kingdom; this little horn is from the four horns of the third kingdom. But this one will be a type of that one, as we shall see. It attains success in aggression against the south. This is the reign of Antiochus IV, “Epiphanes,” from Antioch, who came against Jerusalem in 170 B.C. He seized Jerusalem in 168 and tried to Hellenize it; he set up pagan temples and even sacrificed a sow on the altar. The idol he set up was Zeus, which became known to the Jews as “the abomination of desolation.” He declared himself a god, and killed scores of Jews who would not submit to him and his Hellenization. For three years he terrorized the land and defiled the temple. It led to war (see the books of Maccabees).

B. Gabriel’s Interpretation of the Vision (13-27).

The arch-angel Gabriel brought the interpretation. It begins with the prediction of the length of this abomination of the little horn: 1150 days (composed of 1150 days and 1150 nights), or, three years and 55 days (by the lunar reckoning of 12 months of 30 days each). Then the sanctuary will be re-consecrated (which is celebrated by Jews ever since as *Hanukkah*). This prophecy looks at the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes about 170 B.C.

Gabriel made it absolutely clear that the vision is of the time of wrath at the end of time. Now Gabriel explains the interpretation in no uncertain terms, the names, the empires, the sequence. But he explains that in the end a stern-faced king will take over; he will be strong and powerful, he will demand worship, he will persecute the saints. But he will ultimately be destroyed, but not by human power.

This prophecy has a **near view** and a **far view**, as most prophecies do. The near view is that of **Antiochus Epiphanes IV**, who desecrated the sanctuary and destroyed lives. The records tell us that he was off on a campaign when he heard of the victories of the Maccabees (2 Macc 9:1-28); as he was uttering threats of retaliation, he was seized with severe abdominal pains, fell out of the chariot, and lay for days in pain, stench, and corruption, dying with vain petitions on his lips. So the tyrant met his end by non-human intervention, an abdominal cancer, that turned suddenly severe. But his demise was not the distant end, the ultimate meaning of the prophecy, for the power of the fourth kingdom had next to arise, Rome.

Antiochus was the near fulfillment, but he was a type of the ultimate fulfillment, that **man of sin**, the **beast**, the **antichrist**, who will do the same things at the end of the age, but in a greater way. Paul tells us the coming of the Lord to judge the world cannot happen until this man of sin will be revealed in his power (2 Thess 2:3-4). I would guess that Satan has had his person ready at any given time, waiting for the opportunity. Certainly a Hitler could have fulfilled the bill, especially with his involvement in the occult, if that had been the time of the end. But that was not to be. At the end of the age

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when the LORD withdraws his restraint on Satan, then the man of sin will rise to power, solve the economic problems of the world, bring in what seems to be a lasting peace, but after a few short years will begin his systematized persecution of the saints and his self-deification in his new world religion. Revelation will have much to say about it, and will pinpoint it to something called again “**Babylon**.”

Gabriel’s instruction that the words were closed up til the end of time indicates that they were to be fulfilled in the **distant future**. The “many days” refers to the events of 167-164 B.C. But the “end” refers to both the type and the antitype, Antiochus and

the antichrist. Daniel remained troubled by the whole thing, especially the time of tribulation appointed for the people of God under the reign of this tyrant. But then, his present experience should have told him, that God will use the powers of the world to bring Israel to repentance. But what was troubling is that his current experience in exile was nothing compared to the brutality to come. We who have seen the films of the holocaust can realize something of what evil demonic tyrants are capable of doing to the Jewish people—because they are Jewish, and their Messiah will gain the victory over the whole world. And these prophecies of Daniel, as indeed the words of Jesus in his Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24, 25). All make it clear that it will get far, far worse just before the second coming of Christ in glory.

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The Ninth Study: Daniel Nine

IX. The Vision of the Seventy “Weeks” (9:1-27)

This chapter is one of the most amazing prophetic oracles in the Bible. Unfortunately, most students of the Bible do not give it the attention it requires. Many will say it is too hard to

understand; and others will say it is merely symbolic and cannot be interpreted to refer to anything specific. Some of this is due to preconceived ideas about prophecy, or the events at the

end of the ages, namely that the Bible cannot be taken so literally. But we are left with one overwhelming fact—the prophetic literature is filled with details. And, prophecies of the first coming were fulfilled very literally. Why would it be different for the rest of the prophetic material.

A.

Daniel’s Great Prayer (1-19)

This remarkable prayer shows that Daniel was a diligent student of the Word of God. It also shows that books like Jeremiah and Isaiah were already recognized as Prophetic and Divine,

even though no counsel ever yet met to say that. There was a recognition of “canonicity” when a

book was written by a true prophet, that is, it was instantly recognized as inspired and belonged

in the collection (canon) of the holy books.

Daniel knew that Jeremiah had said that seventy years was set for Babylon (25:11-13) and that it would be smitten by divine judgment. This episode in Daniel 9 takes place in the first

year of Darius, or 539/38 B.C., and so we have to ask when the seventy years began.

Jerusalem

was destroyed back in 587/6 B.C., just 50 years back. But Daniel had been taken in the first wave

of captives in 605 B.C. The return to the land would begin in 536/5 B.C. So now, a couple of years before the seventy is up, it was time for Daniel to pray. I should remind you that prayer is

not talking God into doing what he does not want to do; it is finding the will of God and praying

for God to do what (or according to what) he revealed.

Daniel also would have known the words of Isaiah that prophesied Cyrus by name (44:28

and 45:1,2). How Daniel must have rejoiced to see these prophecies being fulfilled so dramatically before his very eyes. Isaiah 45:4 and 13 have further details about the deliverance.

(As you would guess, these prophecies are so precise that liberal scholars argue that they were

not written by Isaiah, but a later prophet who passed them off as Isaiah's writings).

Verse 4-19 teach us a lot about prayer. Note how Daniel dressed himself appropriately for a confession and appeal. He fasted, mourned, and put on sackcloth. He knew that the nation

had been guilty of idolatry, immorality, and killing prophets. They did not have a leg to stand on in any appeal, other than grace. The Law said that they deserved the punishment (Lev. 26:39-45; Deut. 28:45-63, 30:1-5). The prayer was for God to display the riches of his grace and

mercy. Ezekiel likewise said that God would restore Israel to their land, not because they deserved it, but because his reputation was at stake—it was to make his name holy (the basis for

the prayer in the Lord's prayer). God will keep his promises, because his name depends on it. "Hallowed by thy name" is a prayer that "thy kingdom come" (Ezek. 36).

Daniel's prayer turns to adoration and confession of the nature of the LORD. He is a covenant keeping God (and so the covenant name "Yahweh" is being used throughout the prayer). The adoration combines both God's glorious transcendence and his gracious dealings.

God sent them into exile, not because he did not care for them, or because he could not prevent

it—his justice demanded it—they forced his hand. But their disobedience did not nullify the covenant. In fact, at the darkest hour of their sin, when they were exiled, God declared that he was making a new covenant for them.

So Daniel's prayer is for God to reverse that disaster. The land had been laid waste, the people killed, the temple destroyed. But now God's word that he was going to restore them to the land was the appeal. God's justice is honored by Daniel—in fact, to him that is more important than their situation. It was absolutely necessary for God to uphold his moral law, even

if it meant they would suffer for their sins. But now the appeal is for God's grace and mercy to restore them.

"For your sake" is the theme. Once again they will be the people of God, in the promised land,

serving as a kingdom of priests. At least that is the plan, and that is the prayer.

B.

The Divine Answer to the Prayer (20-27)

The Lord's response came swiftly. Gabriel came immediately to declare the answer, but more than the answer. He came to declare the panorama of God's prophetic schedule from the

decree to rebuild the city to the end of the age.

The revelation is laid out in "seventy **heptads**," or seventy **periods of seven**. We know from the patterns of the prophets and the events so described, that the heptad means a seven year

period. There will be seventy of these seven year periods in God's prophetic chart. After 69 of them have been completed, the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing. Note: here it clearly says Messiah will die. The 70th of the heptads, **which does not follow the 69th heptad**, will be a great time of trouble and tribulation.

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This period of seventy heptads is set for several things:

1. To finish transgression. The period will see the conclusion of all mankind's sin and rebellion. This could only be realized in a new creation, in a new order on earth, in a kingdom made up of righteousness. The current "kingdom" aspect does not meet the requirement.

Only

the coming kingdom of Christ on earth will.

2. To make an end of sin. If this translation is taken it is saying basically the same thing as the last clause. But the word can also mean "sin offering." It may be referring to making

the final sacrifice, and therefore having no need for any more sacrifices. This too will be done within the seventy heptads.

3. To atone for wickedness. This would overlap with the last one. The death of Christ would do away with sin (removal) and also make atonement (make acceptable). There were two

sides of the effect of the death of Christ. The atonement laid the foundation for the rest of the promises of the kingdom to be fulfilled.

4. To bring in everlasting righteousness. This has not happened yet, but will after the prince is destroyed and the tribulations end. There will be an order of righteousness never seen

in human history (see Ps. 45).

5. To fulfill vision and the prophecy. Much of the prophetic vision remains unfulfilled. Many scholars say a lot of the prophecies will not be fulfilled because of Israel's sin.

But that runs completely counter to divine revelation. God knew of their disobedience when making the promises—their disobedience was prophesied! So we look for a literal fulfillment in

the age to come—after the seventy heptads. Daniel certainly has in mind his prophecies.

6. To anoint the most holy. The anointing is not a reference to the anointing of Christ, for he is not called the holy of holies. It will be the new sanctuary, the millennial temple,

described in Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 20, 21.

So, the point is clear, the last heptad, the **last seven years** of the schedule must be the period of time **just before the coming of the Son of Man in Daniel 7:14.**

C.

The Precise Time of the Messiah's Death

This is a very rich, and yet very detailed and involved passage about the times and circumstances of Messiah. It includes the suffering of the Messiah; but I include more detail here because it gives such a specific prophecy of the sweep of history. Daniel writes pertaining

to Jews and Jerusalem. “Seventy **weeks**” makes up the oracle. As mentioned above, this period of time is set to accomplish several things: to restrain or finish transgression (Rom. 6:4), to make an end of sin or sin offerings, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting

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righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), to seal up vision and oracle (he fulfilled them), and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

¹ These were partially fulfilled in the first coming, but must await the second advent for completion.

¹ These were only partially fulfilled at Christ's first advent, and so will be completely fulfilled at the second. So Daniel's vision--we now know--encompasses the period from 444 B.C. to the second advent, even though he focuses on periods of time within that stretch.

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The period of time known as “seventy weeks” begins with the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem,

² which most probably refers to the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah on Nisan 1 (March 4/5) 444 B.C. (Neh. 2:1-8).

³ After 69 “weeks” the Messiah would be cut off, indicating he would not receive the kingdom then. We know that Jesus died the 14th of Nisan, 33 A.D. (see below). So that time period is what Daniel is predicting with 69 weeks. The term rendered “weeks” is the Hebrew word *sh*

^e *bu’ah*, a *heptad* or period of seven. Why does Daniel focus on this period of “sevens”? We know in these passages he had been studying Jeremiah to determine when the exile would end. Jeremiah had predicted that the nation would be in captivity for 70 years because they had not kept the *Sabbath* years to let the land lie in rest; the captivity was back-payment for these omissions (Jer. 25:11 and 29:10). Each of the 70 years of captivity, then, represented the seven years in the sabbath cycle. On the basis of that, Daniel sees 70 of these time periods stretching into the future, each of those 70 likewise represent seven years. Seven of these periods would be 49 years; and from the time references in the context, that works--from the decree given to rebuild Jerusalem to the completion of the building of Jerusalem with moat and plaza (for the importance of the gate and its complex, see Ezra 10:9; Est. 4:6; 2 Chron. 32:6; Neh. 8:1,3). They did not start building the city until Nehemiah returned in 444 B.C. And while they built the walls quickly, the whole city took longer to restore.

A lot of students of the Bible gloss over this section of Daniel as “mere symbolism” because it seems to them too difficult to work out; but the text of Daniel is too specific for us to set aside so easily. Daniel is concerned with exact time frames and precise events. So how does

it come out? Let's test it and see what happens—and then you can decide if it is vague symbolism.

Daniel has 70 “weeks” in all for the prophetic time-table; but after 69 of these the Messiah would be cut off. If the unit “week” is actually seven years, then 70 “weeks” would be 490 years. So 69 weeks would be 483 years—if one uses solar years. Beginning with 444 B.C., the total of 483 years would come out to 38 A.D. But they did not use the solar calendar; they used a lunar calendar of 12 months of 30 days each. How do we know this? There is good evidence that the year was calculated as 360 days, or 12 equal months of 30 days. But since the harvests grew on the solar system, each year the harvest would get a few days away from the day set for the harvest festivals. So they calculated how often they had to add a 13th month to the year to bring the calendar and the harvest back into harmony. We know they used the lunar months to calculate the year: we see in the story of the Flood that the waters of the Flood began on the 17th day of the second month, and ended on the 17th day of the seventh month, which we are told is 150 days— five months of 30 days. John in Revelation takes the Old Testament

² This is not to be confused with the earlier decrees to rebuild the Temple, or walls. This is the complete city.

³ Nisan 1 in 444 was either March 4 or March 5, March 5 being more likely since the crescent of the new moon would have been visible late in the evening of March 4, about 10:00 p.m. and could have been easily missed (Goldstine, *New and Full Moons 1001 B.C. to A.D. 1651* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973), p. 47.

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prophecies of the end-times and calculates the three and a half years (“times, time and half a time”) as 42 months to be 1260 days. That is 42 months of 30 days to get 1260 days. So we are on good ground to say that 360 days made up a year in the prophetic calendar (see the detailed discussion by Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan]). Since there is a difference in calculation by years, we have to go to the lowest common denominator—how many days in the prophecy.

So then it is a matter of mathematics: 69 weeks times seven years, times 360 days of their calendar year will give us the number of days in the prophecy: **173,880** days. So Daniel is

saying after the decree of March 5, 444 B.C., there are 173,880 days until Messiah is cut off. Now, this can be verified with our calendar system. The difference between 444 B.C.

and 33 A.D. is 476 **solar** years. But how many days is that? By multiplying 476 by 365.24219879 (or by 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45.975 seconds), one gets **173,855** days,

⁶ hours, 52 minutes, 44 seconds—or 173,855 days. Now there is a difference of 25 days. But remember, the solar reckoning is from March 5, 444 to March 5, 32 A.D., calculating on exact

years. If we add the difference of the 25 days to March 5, we come to March 30 (of A.D. 33).

In

the year 33 A.D. that was Nisan 10, the Monday of the Passion Week, the probable day of the Triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

⁴

Jesus died Nisan 14, 33 A.D., or April 3, 33 A.D.

⁵
So Daniel is saying that from March 5, 444 B.C., there will be 173,880 days and then after that (by 4 days) the Messiah will be cut off. No wonder there was an increase in Messianic expectation in the days of Jesus; groups like the Essenes knew and loved the Book of Daniel.

⁴
Nisan 10 is the day the Jews chose the animal in the Temple that they were going to use for Passover on Nisan 14.

⁵
Jesus was born in the winter of 5/4 B.C. just prior to the death of Herod, who died between March 29 and April 11, 4 B.C. He began His public ministry in the fall of 29, just after John began His that summer, the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias. Jesus' ministry included at least three, most likely four trips to Jerusalem for Passover, the last being his death (the narratives mention three different Passovers, but a fourth fits in the chronology as well). So that rules out a 30 A.D. death, which would have given him a ministry of a few months. Passover fell on Friday in 30, 33, and 36. The year 36 is too late, for Pilate was only there through 35 A.D. So 33 A.D. fits all the evidence the best.

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The prophecy continues then to describe the people of the prince who was to come and try to destroy God's program. Daniel's oracle at this point becomes very general, saying that there would be wars until the great destruction at the end of the age. The statement that Messiah

was to be cut off "**after**" the 69

th
week, but **not in** the 70

th
week, is very unusual but very precise, and can only be explained by an interval of unknown length between the 69

th
and 70 weeks. This is often the way Old Testament prophetic perspective works, for they look to the future and see the pinnacles of events, but not necessarily how close the events are.

⁶
In Matthew

24 and 25 Jesus himself predicts the destruction of Jerusalem after his death and the great wars and abominations that come at the end of the age prior to his return. His disciples could not have discerned from the way that was laid out that there would be 2000 years at least between some of the sections. So Daniel's discussion of the great desecrations to come jumps ahead to the

70

th
week, to the end of the age.

⁷
And we know this 70

th
week has not yet happened, because according to all Daniel's prophecies, it will end with the coming of the Son of Man in glory to destroy the evil world ruler and his armies and end war for all time. That did not happen when Rome was ever so tyrannical, or any time down through history, even though there have been plagues and devastations that sound a little like what is described in Revelation 14-19, but they

do not measure up to those great plagues to come in their devastation, and they did not end with the second coming.

The amazing prophecy of Daniel 9 should bring comfort to all believers! It tells us that everything is working to plan in God's redemptive program. It tells us that Messiah was to die in his earlier work on earth; but his ultimate work on earth awaits his coming in glory. It also tells us that all the wars and conflicts are part of God's plan and not a failure of it. They will not hinder the fulfillment of the promises—of which we are heirs.

⁶ This is clear from most Messianic prophecies that do not distinguish between a first and second advent; they just tell of the coming of Messiah.

⁷ It may be that God chose to do it this way because of His intent to make a legitimate presentation of the kingdom of heaven to Israel (even though He knew they would reject). But the contingency is there--if they receive it, this is Elijah who should come (but they didn't, and this wasn't Elijah).

40

The Tenth Study: Daniel Ten

X. The Triumph of Persistent Prayer (10:1-21)

A.

Daniel's Disturbing Vision and Prayerful Concern (1-3)

Now we have a vision in the third year of Cyrus, about 535 B.C., just a few years before Daniel's death (he would have been about 90 in 530). This was Daniel's last vision; and it concerned a great war. We do not know exactly what it was, but it clearly portended times of testing and trouble for the people of Israel.

Daniel was so moved by this vision that he spend three weeks mourning (a word that is usually used with the death of a loved one) and fasting, indications of his intense supplication and prayer. He even forsook personal grooming. His sole interest now was the intercession for Israel, that they would survive and carry out its calling to its holy mission as God's witness to the world. He wanted assurance from God for this. He wanted assurance that the 42,000 Jews who had gone back to the land under prince Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah would be able to carry on in these last days til the coming of the Messiah, as Daniel saw it. Daniel may have already heard that the work on the temple was stopped (Ezra 4:5, 24) and the people frustrated. It would be a few years before it was started again, but was finished in March 515 B.C.

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B.

God's Delayed Messenger (4-14)

It was in early spring, the 24th of Nisan, just ten days after Passover, that Daniel received the answer from God. We do not know what he was doing by the Tigres River, but that is where he was.

But Daniel saw the vision of the angel.

Verses 5 and 6 are perhaps the most detailed description in the Bible of an angel. The angel was dressed in linen, like the dazzling white in Luke 24:4; his sash or belt was made of the finest gold, perhaps in chain-links or embroidery; his body glowed

with a luminous color, like chrysolite (a yellow or golden shade of beryl); his face flashed like lightning in its splendor; his eyes blazed like torches (Rev. 1:14); his arms and legs beamed like burnished bronze; and his voice was like the sound of a multitude (often used for people, or rain or oceans). The vision in Rev. 10:1 is very similar to this.

Verse 7 says that Daniel was not alone when he received the vision. The others heard something, and fled (compare the revelation to Saul on the road to Damascus, of which others were aware, Acts 9:7). Daniel was once again overwhelmed, and he passed out. But the angel's touch revived him. Daniel, the angel said, was a man most precious, an expression that can only have reassured Daniel that he was one of God's loved servants. What made him so precious? He was completely absorbed with the Word of God, desired wisdom and spiritual understanding, and had yielded his heart to doing the will of God.

Verses 12-14 provide an amazing insight into the supernatural forces involved when a believer engages in earnest prayer, here especially for the sake of Israel. When Daniel began to pray, the Lord commissioned this angel to go immediately with the answer—but the “prince of Persia” fought him and delayed the answer. This is not the king of Persia, but an evil spirit, a Satanic agent assigned to the sponsorship and control of the Persian empire. These national “princes” are part of the “principalities and dominions” against whom the spiritual warfare must be. It explains how these kingdoms could become so powerful and so dominant so fast. God could easily destroy these fallen angels; but as with the case of Job, he prefers to let the Satanic powers try their best to do their work, because he knows his saints and angels will achieve the victory. In this case the prince of Persia no doubt had tried to destroy Daniel and his friends, and had tried to hinder the Jews returning to their land, because if they returned that would open the way

for the next phase of the prophecy, the coming of the Son of Man.

Verse 13 says that **Michael** the **archangel**, one of the chief princes, broke the hindrance and paved the way for the answer to come. Michael is a faithful minister, always protecting the

chosen people of God, and able to overcome even Satan himself, as he will do in the future (Rev 12).

So the instruction by Jesus is certainly applicable—always pray without ceasing, never

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give up, because we do not know what is involved in the delayed answer to prayer. According to verse 14, the vision of Daniel goes beyond his times or his immediate future, to the end of the ages. The vision includes that of the great conflicts of Antiochus (the type) and Antichrist or the beast (the fulfillment of the type). Satan will do all he can to prevent

the kingdom of God, at every step of the way try to thwart the fulfillment of any part of the program—but he will fail.

C.

The Angel's Encouragement (15-21)

Daniel remained overwhelmed and speechless. But the angel touched Daniel and gave him renewed strength. Daniel knew then that the Lord was with him, and was ready to use him

again in a mighty way.

The interpreting angel indicated that he was still engaged in a combat for the Lord. He

would soon have to return to the battlefield to renew the fight with the prince of Persia appointed by the prince of hell. But when that fight was over, then he would have to engage in warfare with the prince of Greece, that Satanic spirit that enabled Greece to conquer and control the known world (with God's sovereign permission of course). We do not know where these battles would have taken place; we do not know how they fought. Revelation 12:7 gives a hint about warfare in heaven, but which heaven is that? In that passage Michael will defeat Satan and he will be cast down to the earth, and knowing that his time is short, will be at his worst. Revelation 12 is not the fall of Satan before creation; he did fall, and took angels with him; but he has access back into heaven to accuse the brethren as we see in Job 1, 2. At the end of the age he will be finally expelled and limited to a sphere where he will unleash all of his terror. So we have to know that we are fighting against such principalities and powers. The humans who are the wicked enemies are Satan's dupes. So we can pray for the lost, knowing that they are blinded and controlled by Satan, the real enemy. And we can know that the angels fight for us and keep these wicked spirits at bay, so that God's prophetic program will steadily march forward to the coming day of the Lord.

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The Eleventh Study: Daniel Eleven

XI. DANIEL AND THE GREEK PERIOD

"The Tribulation under Antiochus and under Antichrist" (Dan. 11:1-45)

In this section I shall go into a lot more detail for two reasons, one, Daniel is so very detailed here, and two, it is a period that most Christians know very little about, being in what is

called the "silent years" before the New Testament. But we have a lot of information from the Books of Maccabees, the writings of Josephus, and various other secular sources. Here too Daniel proves to be so very accurate, so much so that many scholars point to this as history and

not prophecy, that is, a 6

th

century Daniel could not have written it. But that denies prophecy;

and besides, as I said before, if it had been history it would have been far more specific than it is.

Daniel sees visions with images and symbols; when we see history, we know what his images mean.

A.

From the Persian Empire to the Death of Alexander (1-4)

In just a few verses Daniel moves swiftly through a couple of centuries. The Persian king who invaded Greece would be **Xerxes** (485-464 B.C.), who came after Daniel was gone.

Before him there would be three kings: **Cambyses** who conquered Egypt (529-523),

Gaumata

who passed himself off as Cyrus' son (523,22), and **Darius** who assassinated the imposter

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(522-485). Darius tried to take revenge on Athens, but had a crippling defeat at the Battle of **Marathon** (490 B.C.). So his son, the great **Xerxes**, tried to avenge that defeat, but he suffered a greater defeat at the Battle of **Salamis** (480 B.C.), wherein 100,000 men were crushed by the Greeks. Xerxes came home humiliated, and was not about to be opposed by his wife—so when that happened he deposed Vashti, and married **Esther**.

Verses 3 and 4 record the rise of **Alexander**, “the mighty king.” In seven years he would establish a vast empire, but then die suddenly (in 323 B.C.). Daniel then says that the empire will be uprooted and given to others who are not his sons. So four smaller Greek empires emerged: Macedonia and Greece under **Antipater**, Thrace and Asia Minor under **Lysimachus**,

Asia, Syria and “Palestine”

⁸ under **Seleucus**, and Egypt under **Ptolemy**. The dynasties of Seleucus and Ptolemy would fight for the next 150 years over control of the region that came to be called Palestine. None of these first ruling families were blood relatives, so Daniel's prediction was precise.

B.

The Wars between the Ptolemies and Seleucids (5-20)

Verses 5 and 6 tell how the “king of the south” (**Ptolemy I**) moved to invade the “king of

⁸ I shall use the conventional designation for the holy land as “Palestine,” but it is anachronistic. The land was not called Palestine until the time of Hadrian, 135 A.D. He named it Palestine because the Philistines, Greeks from the Aegean area and Troy, had settled there, and that was more fitting for him as a name than a Hebrew or Arabic name.

the north,” and managed to take Cyprus. But over the next century the Ptolemies did little more

than rule Egypt and Cyprus. His commander who was “stronger than he” turned out to be **Seleucus Nicator**, who had defected to serve Ptolemy. He became king in 310, and so started the Seleucid dynasty, which would last til 64 B.C.

After the death of Ptolemy I (285), **Ptolemy II** took up the wars with the Seleucid empire till 252. A peace treaty was arranged, and **Berenice**, the daughter of Ptolemy, married **Antiochus II** – which Daniel mentions. But he was already married, and his deposed wife, Laodice, managed to rebel and have the new wife and her infant son assassinated. A few years

later the king also died from poison (247). **Laodice** became queen regent, and her young son **Seleucus II** crown prince. Daniel's prophecy came true, that Berenice would be handed over and

not retained in power.

Verses 7 and 8 lay out the subsequent reprisal. **Ptolemy III** began reign in 247 and organized a great expedition force against Syria to avenge Berenice his sister. The war continued

from 246-241, in which Ptolemy captured and pillaged Antioch. He went back to Egypt laden with the spoil, but did not try to control Syria. They made a peace treaty in 240, for the northern

king turned his attention to the Aegean kingdoms. Daniel has this to the letter in verses 7 and 8.

Verse 9 predicts a subsequent foray of **Seleucus II** into Ptolemy's territories. They

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regained control of northern Syria and Phoenicia.

Verse 10 announces a new development. The "king of the north" will muster a huge army and head south. This was **Antiochus III, the Great**, who conquered the holy land. Seleucus II

had died in 226 and was succeeded by **Seleucus III** who reigned only 3 years (and fought in Asia Minor). Antiochus the Great (called so because of military feats) began to reign in 223. He

first was defeated by **Ptolemy IV** (219, 218)—which Daniel mentions in verse 11. Then Daniel

says the king of the south will become proud over his triumphs and slaughter thousands. In the

peace treaty Antiochus III had to cede all Palestine back to Ptolemy IV. Antiochus turned his attention east, to the region of the Caspian Sea and the Indus Valley. He was absorbed with these

campaigns. But in 203 Ptolemy IV died and **Ptolemy V** came to the throne, a mere boy.

Antiochus saw his chance.

Verses 13-19 tell how the "king of the north" (Antiochus III) will amass a huge army and advance south. He pushed all the way down to the fortress of Gaza. The Ptolemaic army and a

number of Jewish zealots (Daniel calls them "your own people") would fight to stop them, but

failed. The king of the north captured the fortified city of Sidon, always difficult, and always a

sign of the border. When Scopus, the southern general, finally surrendered to Antiochus III, all

the "beautiful land," Palestine, came under the dominion of the Seleucid Empire. Antiochus entered Jerusalem in 198, but as a deliverer and benefactor. Daniel tells how he tried to make a

peace alliance with the Ptolemies through a marriage. He gave his daughter **Cleopatra** to marry

the boy-king Ptolemy V (about 10 years old now), with the plan to have an heir and control Egypt. But, Cleopatra became entirely sympathetic to her husband, and turned against her father

(as Daniel mentions in verse 17).

Verse 18 points to the new development of Antiochus III's struggles, this time against **Pergamum** and the **Aegean** Coastline. The people of **Rhodes** appealed for help to **Rome**.

And

Rome's enemy, **Hannibal**, came out of exile and joined Antiochus as an advisor. Antiochus had

a huge and powerful army and navy, and so crossed the Hellespont into Thrace and took considerable land. But the Macedonians and the Greek league, with Rome behind them, turned

Antiochus back at the Battle of **Thermopylae** (191). They chased Antiochus' huge 70,000-man

army with only 30,000 men, and defeated him. He surrendered all lands west of the Taurus mountains, his navy, his elephant brigade, and had to pay a huge indemnity of fifteen to twenty

thousand talents. His second son was taken to Rome as hostage. This hostage-son later became the terror of the land, **Antiochus IV, Epiphanes**. Daniel says Antiochus III would come to an end. Well, what happened was that he was not able to pay the money, so he resorted

to pillaging temples. But at the temple of Bel at Elymais, the people resisted and killed him. Verse 20 says his first son, **Seleucus IV**, tried to tax the people. He was poisoned.

C.

The Great Persecution under Antiochus IV, Epiphanes (21-35).

At first, the Greek rulers in Syria exhibited tolerance for the Jews, especially under the rule of Seleucus IV in 187 B.C. But when Seleucus was murdered in 175 B.C., his brother,

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Antiochus IV Epiphanes, took the throne and began the persecution of the Jews over their religion.

As part of an internal power play, and with the temple treasury as part of the prize, Antiochus replaced Jerusalem's High Priest **Onias III** with his [Onias'] brother **Jason**. This was new to the Jews whose Law stipulated a life-long tenure for the High Priest. Now Jason began instituting many Hellenizing changes in society, even accommodating the Jewish faith to

Greek ways. By changing the status of Jerusalem to a Greek city he increased its wealth, as well as his own and that of the other Hellenizers. His opponents could not accept these changes

(2 Macc. 4:11).

Jason outlived his usefulness, and so around 170, Antiochus awarded **Menelaus**, a Benjamite, the High Priesthood in exchange for a bribe (2 Macc. 4:32-50). But when Antiochus

was off fighting in Egypt, renewing the old rivalry with the Ptolemies, riots broke out in Jerusalem over the appointment (2 Macc. 4:25-26). When he returned from Egypt he was determined to subdue the Jews. His departure from Egypt had been humiliating because he was

forced to withdraw by a decision of the Roman Senate that upheld the stipulations of an earlier

treaty. Brought low by the Romans, whom he did not want to fight, he was in no mood to be troubled by the Jews. So when he came to Jerusalem he put down the rebellion and solidified the position of Menelaus (2 Macc. 5:11-21); he also stationed Gentile troops in Jerusalem who

set up Syrian gods in the Temple and defiled Jewish worship (1 Macc. 1:39).

All of this divided the Jews between the Hellenizers, who cared little about religion, and the faithful (*hasidim* as they were called, not the same as the *hasidim* of today, although the word

is the same), who were outraged. The Hellenizers won out and their opponents, mostly conservative priests and scribes, were forced out. But with this affront to Jewish worship the opposition took on a religious theme and fervor—the loyal Jews were now defending the Jewish

faith, the Law of Moses, against pagans.

Antiochus proceeded to outlaw Jewish observances like circumcision, Sabbath-day observance, and temple ritual—in an effort to obliterate the ancient faith of Israel—"Yahwism." In December, 167, he offered pigs (a Greek custom) on the altar in Jerusalem (1 Macc. 1:41-50);

he also sacrificed to Zeus (1 Macc. 1:54-59; 2 Macc. 6:2-5). Moreover, his governing policies brought cruelty to those who practiced Judaism. This was the abomination that made the holy city desolate. All of this man's outrageous acts were predicted in Daniel 11:21-32.

The Jewish revolt began in 167 B.C. when the Jews had enough of the pagan worship of Antiochus. An old priest and elder named **Mattathias** refused to make the pagan sacrifices. He killed a fellow Israelite who (perhaps out of fear) tried to make the sacrifice, as well as the official who demanded it. Mattathias and his followers then fled for safety. Their subsequent decision to fight to defend the faith was triggered by a Syrian slaughter of Jews over a conflict

about work on the Sabbath (1 Macc. 2:31-38). They decided they would fight even on the Sabbath to save Judaism.

When Mattathias died in 166, his sons took up the fight, tearing down pagan altars and

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killing defecting Jews. **Judas**, his third son, took over the leadership, fought guerilla warfare against the Syrians, and was finally able to beat back the Syrian army, at least to the point of being able to take Jerusalem and force Syria to withdraw its rulings against Jewish religion (2 Macc. 9:19-27). The Temple was purified in 164 B.C., rededicated, and its lamps on the lamp stand relit (which has been celebrated ever since with **Hanukkah**, "Dedication").

While Judas was able to gain religious freedom in that struggle, he was not able to attain the political freedom he sought in the subsequent years. In 162 when he tried to take the citadel

in Jerusalem (1 Macc. 6:18ff.), the Hellenizers appealed to the new Syrian king, Antiochus V, for military help. The conflict that followed led to a siege of Jerusalem at a time when food was

already scarce because it was a Sabbatical year. But the siege ended suddenly when the Syrian

throne was threatened by another individual claiming to be the rightful king. According to the settlement that was quickly reached Menelaus was executed, conditions were restored to what they were before the persecution of Antiochus IV, Judas became the head of the Jewish state, but

Syria retained dominion and kept the citadel. With this change the Hellenizing party of Jews all

but disappeared.

Demetrius, the legitimate heir to the Syrian throne, then overthrew Antiochus V. He attempted to appease the Jews by appointing a legitimate priest, Alcimus, to the office of High

Priest (1 Macc. 7). But Alcimus, although popular with most of the Jews, had enemies. He was accused of earlier having offered pagan sacrifices in the Temple. And in the squabble that

ensued he made the mistake of executing sixty *hasidim* (devout Jews) who opposed him. Judas,

one of those opposed to this priest, led a renewed rebellion against Syria and the Jewish apostates. But because these rebels were now only a minority, Judas had to obtain support from

Rome through a treaty. It was a treaty that would benefit the Jews later but proved costly to Judas now, for by getting involved with Rome against Syria, he found himself in a bigger war, a

war from which most of his men fled, and in which

he, courageous to the end, died.

His brother **Jonathan** took over the leadership of the rebellion in 161; but because the Jews had their religion back he found that they were not that interested in continuing a political

fight against Syria. Jonathan settled for peace with Syria in 156 and retired to his home. But conflict soon arose over another appointment to the priesthood. Alexander Balas arrived in Syria

in 152 to contend for the throne. He found in Jonathan an eager ally against the ruling power. So after his victory he rewarded Jonathan by appointing him High Priest in place of Alcimus, who had died. This was a most surprising turn of affairs: Jonathan, an anti-Syrian rebel and a conservative, had now accepted the appointment to the priesthood by a foreign king.

Jonathan,

of course, was not a Zadokite priest (descendant of Zadok); and it is possible that this appointment, or one of the several like it, was the occasion for the departure of many of the faithful for the desert, where some of them became known as “**Essenes**.” As we shall see, the Dead Sea scrolls refer to a “wicked priest,” a non-Zadokite priest, as the reason for the community's withdrawing from temple worship.

Additional Historical Information

I shall now trace the rest of this story to the New Testament as an aside to our study of Daniel, for the sequence of events set in motion here had repercussions for the situation in the land in the days of Jesus and the early Church.

A.

The Hasmonean Rule (143-63 B.C.)

With the Syrian throne in turmoil, Judea and other states seized the opportunity to set up their little kingdoms. But Jonathan was caught in 143 and treacherously killed (1 Macc. 12). **Simon**, the last of the sons of Mattathias (the family Hasmon), assumed the leadership in 143. According to 1 Maccabees 13:41-42, he was able to achieve political freedom for the Jews, freedom from tribute to Syria as well as and control of the citadel of Jerusalem. With him the **Hasmonean Rule** actually began (143-63 B.C.). But Jewish life under this regime was not much better than under Syria; it was fraught with corruption and intrigue.

Simon enjoyed peace in Judea because Syria was occupied elsewhere. In 140 B.C. he was proclaimed High Priest and Prince, thus joining the political and religious offices which was

against the Scriptures (the king was from Judah, the priests from Levi). He took the title “Prince

of the People.” Since many followed a strict observance of the Torah, there was controversy. No doubt, some opposed the idea of a non-Davidic king, and others objected to a non-Zadokite

priest; but one person being both King and High Priest—by self-proclamation—was completely unacceptable. Then, to complicate matters, when Antiochus VII decided that he wanted his lands back, war broke out again. His military effort against the Jews was feeble and failing—until someone murdered Simon and two of his sons in 134 (1 Macc. 16).

John **Hyrchanus**, the one son who was left alive, sought a treaty with Syria in order to stay in power. By the treaty Hyrchanus lost the Jewish independence and the nation became a vassal of Syria once again. But he was allowed to keep his kingdom, now limited to Judea, with

the provision that the walls of Jerusalem be pulled down. The Jews were permitted to keep their

religious feasts and observances. And John Hyrcanus was the High Priest. Since the **Pharisees**

objected to this High Priest having temporal power, Hyrcanus allied himself with the **Sadducees**

(these two political-religious parties had been active for fifty years over the issue of Hellenization). In this event we find some of the earliest information about the disagreements between these two parties.

In 128 B.C. when the Seleucid empire was disintegrating Hyrcanus used his military strength, largely made up of mercenaries, to capture **Samaria** and **Idumea**. He destroyed the Samaritan temple in a crushing blow that inflamed Samaritan bitterness toward the Jews, and he

forced the Idumeans to convert to Judaism (to be circumcised or die). Ironically, this Idumean policy would open the door later for **Herod**, an **Idumean** (“**Edom.**” **from Esau**), to claim to be

a “Jew.”

When Hyrcanus died in 104, his will made his wife the ruler and his son **Aristobulus** the

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High Priest. But this Aristobulus imprisoned his mother as well as his brothers and proclaimed

himself king. He conquered Galilee, and continued the policy there of forced conversions to the

Jewish faith. As a result, the Jews in Jerusalem held Galilean “Jews” in contempt (John 1:46; 7:52). This reign of Aristobulus lasted only about a year.

Salome Alexandra, his widow, released the three brothers from prison. One of them, Alexander **Janneus**, assumed the office of High Priest. He then married Salome by the levirate

marriage, which was unlawful for a High Priest to do, and through it he became king. He reigned from 103-76, extending the Jewish kingdom to its limits.

But Alexander Janneus had great contempt for ritual law; his participation was often half-hearted, and certainly offensive. On one occasion (ca. 90 B.C.) in contempt for the Pharisees he poured the libations of the Temple on his feet—and was promptly pelted with citrons

by the people. In retaliation he ordered an attack on the people, and many were killed.

The “faithful” Jews tried even harder to get rid of him; in 88 they appealed to and allied themselves with Demetrius III of Syria. Alexander was soundly defeated; but the Jews, perhaps

having second thoughts, decided that on the whole they preferred Hasmonean rule to Seleucid rule. So Alexander was retained as king. He immediately suppressed the insurrection by the conservatives, and to celebrate his victory he crucified 800 Jews, Pharisees mostly, after having

their wives and children butchered. Thousands fled the land (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13, 14, 2; *Wars of the Jews* 1, 93-98).

It is important to note that this early conservative opposition to the Hasmoneans was led by the Pharisees, both during the reigns of Hyrcanus and Janneus. It was the Sadducees who were allowed to determine policies, even though they were the minority. Nevertheless, on his deathbed Alexander reversed himself: he instructed his wife to align herself with the Pharisees

because they were backed by the people.

His wife Salome Alexandra had married and outlived two kings; she was not now about to relinquish the throne to one of the sons, **Aristobulus** or **Hyrcanus**. As the new political ruler she made Hyrcanus the High Priest, obviously not being able to assume that office herself. She also made peace with the Pharisees as her husband had advised and allowed them to dominate government. Not surprisingly, they took the opportunity to get rid of their old enemies. When the Queen died in 67 B.C., **Hyrcanus II** held both offices of High Priest and King, but it was short-lived, three months to be exact. War broke out between the brothers over the throne. Most of the support, certainly the anti-Pharisaic party, went to **Aristobulus** who won rather easily and replaced his deposed brother for a short time as both ruler and High Priest. With his succession the Sadducees were once again in power. Hyrcanus, however, was not through. He sought help from the Nabateans in Idumea. Antipater, the king of Idumea, served as his intermediary. He first persuaded Aretus, the Nabatean leader, to attack Palestine with massive power. Rome intervened and stopped the war

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and made Syria a Roman province. Moreover, Rome's **Pompey** decided in favor of **Hyrcanus**, largely through the effective appeal of Antipater. So Hyrcanus, the Pharisee, became the religious and political leader, although he was stripped of his power in 57 B.C.

B.

The Roman Rule

By 63 B.C. Judea was clearly under Roman rule, although the Jews had a certain amount of freedom. This was now Daniel's vision of the fourth beast, or the iron empire. Throughout the following years, up until 48, Aristobulus made several futile attempts to regain power.

But

this came to an end with the Roman civil war. Hyrcanus and Antipater supported Julius Caesar;

for this they were rewarded well— **Hyrcanus** was made ethnarch as well as High Priest, and **Antipater** was made procurator of Judea. **Caesar** also made **Antigonus**, a son of Aristobulus, a governor, and placed **Herod** over Galilee.

After Julius Caesar was killed in 44 B.C., the country suffered under Cassius and then Antony. But in the year 40, when the Parthians invaded Syria and Palestine, Antigonus joined them and with their support captured Jerusalem. He then cut off the ears of Hyrcanus so that he

could no longer serve as High Priest in that mutilated condition. Antigonus held control for three years until he was defeated by Herod and then beheaded by Rome.

When Herod destroyed Antigonus he brought the Hasmonean line to an end. It is unlikely that many mourned the end of an era that had non-Davidic kings, non-Zadokite priests,

endless wars and much corruption in high places. But through their wars and policies of forced

conversions, Idumea and Galilee were now part of the Jewish state along with Judea, with only

the area of Samaria left out. Interestingly, with the loss of Judean autonomy, the Pharisees quit their political involvement and became more concerned with devotion to the Law and purity. They no longer concerned themselves with who ruled the country, as long as they were allowed their religion. The Pharisees' retreat left room for the Sadducees in the governing class to exercise more control. Nevertheless, the Pharisees continued to represent essential Judaism. As for the Essenes, it seems that they became less monastic at about this time, possibly due in part to the end of the despised Hasmonean priesthood, and partly because they needed more people for their settlements. Having failed in their attempt at self rule, the Jews now were to be subjected to foreign rule once again. **Herod** was the “client king,” while Rome held the power. And this Herod was the son of Antipater the Idumean, a descendant of Edom–Esau of all people! Antipater had seen to it that Herod was made governor in Galilee; but Herod was a diplomat in his own right. Not only did he gain the favor of Caesar, he also found favor with Cassius and Antony: in 40 B.C. with the help of bribes he was able to obtain the appointment as King of Judea; and with the help of Rome he was able to take control of the kingdom by defeating Antigonus. Then, in the Battle of **Actium** in 31 B.C. Herod found himself on the losing side with his support of **Antony** and **Cleopatra**. But somehow he managed to convince the winner, Caesar **Octavian** (**Augustus**), that he could be just as loyal to him.

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So Herod remained a vassal under Rome; he was limited in making wars and treaties, but he was free from tribute and had the right to levy taxes. He embarked on an enormous building program to make his country a prestigious Hellenistic state. Even though he did not live the Jewish faith, he tried to represent himself as a Jew, to appease the Jews. He tore down the 500 year old Temple of Zerubbabel and began building a new one to match his other building projects (Caesarea Maritima, Herodion, Massada, macharias). It would be the greatest religious building complex in the known world (since it was actually a renovation of Zerubbabel's, the two together are called the “second temple,” Solomon's being the first; today there are “third temple” proponents who want to build the temple for Messiah). As part of Herod's appeal to the Jews he was careful to build the temple according to Jewish laws, using consecrated priests trained to do much of the work. But his pagan ways and his sinful life drew much opposition. He may have found favor with Rome, and sought to appease the Jews, but he still made enemies on every level, including his own family. Herod tried to link himself to the Hasmoneans by marrying **Mariamme**, the daughter of Hyrcanus II and the niece of his enemy Antigonus. He still needed to replace the mutilated

priest, and so he used this chance to appease the pious Jews who thought he was a half-Jew, an

Idumean, and a friend of the Romans. He chose Hananeel, a Zadokite of Babylon. But after great opposition to this selection, he yielded and made the popular Aristobulus the High Priest—whom he subsequently drowned while swimming. He was summoned to Rome for trial.

Claiming to be innocent and displaying great sadness, he was able to gain acquittal from Rome

for this crime, probably through a bribe.

By eliminating the Hasmoneans Herod brought to an end the line of royal priests. He appointed seven high priests during his tenure (should have only been one, two at the most, by

birth and not appointment); consequently, there were a number of ex-high priests around in the

days of Jesus. **Annas** served from 6-15, and his son-in-law, **Caiaphas**, who tried Jesus, served

from 18-36. Herod and his successors, Archelaus and the procurators, controlled the High Priests by retaining all their garments and implements until needed.

Herod's reign was contemptible in the eyes of the righteous. He interfered with the High Priesthood, appointing priests and deposing them at will. He was accommodating to pagan ways, making temples and athletic arenas in the Roman mode. His building projects at Caesarea and in Jerusalem were magnificent; and his desert fortresses were absolutely amazing.

But they all speak of one who had unlimited funds and was paranoid. And well should he have

been; even though he was a powerful and effective ruler, he was also ruthless and cruel. He was

responsible for the death of his wife Mariamme, as well as several of his own sons and relatives.

It is not hard to imagine how such a man could command the killing of the innocent children when he heard of the birth of a king (Matt. 2).

But even though Herod ruled as a tyrant and levied heavy taxes, he did create a kingdom with magnificent buildings, garrisons, and a first-rate harbor at Caesarea. But probably most significantly, he gave the people a generation of peace, something they had not had for ages. After what the Jews had been through for decades before, this time was most welcome.

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Herod died in 4 B.C. (thus the birth of **Jesus** would have occurred in late 5 B.C. or early 4 B.C. because the wise men came to Herod). His will made his son **Archelaus** king of Judea,

and his other sons tetrarchs, **Herod Antipas** in Galilee and Perea, and **Herod Philip** in the northeast. Caesar Augustus ratified the will, but reduced Archelaus to ethnarch of Judea, Samaria

and Idumea. Archelaus had a cruel reign of about ten years, 4 B.C. to 6 A.D. He angered the Jews by marrying his brother's widow and deposing High Priests; he was subsequently banished

by Rome. Consequently, from 6 to 66 A.D. Judea was under the authority of prefects or **procurators** who ruled from Caesarea. Most of them were powerful military governors, but

were not very wise or capable men in other respects. Some of the policies at the very beginning prompted the formation of the zealot movement. And later, Pontius Pilate had nothing but trouble during his ten years in Judea (from 26-36). In fact, he was removed by Rome for cruelty, which must have been excessive because Rome itself was not known for softness. The other sons of Herod the Great lasted longer. **Philip** had a long reign in the northeast territories (from 4 B.C. to 34 A.D.); he built Caesarea Philippi. Herod **Antipas** also held on to his territory for a number of years (until about 40 A.D.). Antipas is known in the Bible for his deposing of his wife and marrying his brother's wife, **Herodias**. (It is not clear whether this was Philip the tetrarch or another relative named Philip). **John the Baptist** preached against his evil practices and was beheaded by him (Matt. 14:1-12). Jesus referred to Herod Antipas as “that fox” (i.e., a pest; Luke 13:32). But his only encounter with this king was at his trial: Herod Antipas was in Jerusalem as part of his pilgrimage, and Pilate, who had the jurisdiction, sent Jesus to him, perhaps trying to avoid the decision, or perhaps out of professional courtesy (Luke 23:6-12). Herod took no action.

When Philip the tetrarch died, **Herod Agrippa I**, a grandson of Herod the Great, replaced him. Agrippa was a good friend of Caligula in Rome; and when Caligula became emperor he gave Agrippa the tetrarchy as well as the title of king (34 A.D.). This made Agrippa’s sister Herodias jealous; she persuaded her husband, Antipas, to seek royal status also. But Agrippa persuaded Caligula of the evils of Antipas and got him banished to Gaul. By 41 A.D. Agrippa had been given all the territory of Antipas as well as Samaria, Judea and Idumea. While this king seems to have been the least offensive of the lot, he did persecute the Christians, putting **James** to death (Acts 12:1-3). But then in the height of his pride while on stage in the theater at

Caesarea Maritima (by the Sea) he was struck down by God and suffered a horrible death himself (Acts 12:20-23).

The next emperor, Claudius, made the kingdom a province under procurators. And with Jewish zeal for independence rising once again, these governors did little to appease the people.

Two of them, **Felix** and **Festus**, mentioned in the Book of Acts, were basically despots who paved the way for the war that marked the end of the Jewish state.

Herod Agrippa II, the son of Agrippa I, was made the king of Philip's tetrarchy and the guardian of the Temple with the right to appoint the High Priest. Even though this was meant by Rome to appease the Jews, it did not work. He was as bad as the others; and in the war of

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66-70 he actually sided with Rome. It was this Agrippa II who heard Paul's speech (Acts 26). There were two major wars with Rome that brought an end to the Jewish state, if we can call it that, a puppet state. The first war broke out in **Caesarea** in **66 A.D.** It was over in 70 A.D. with the capture of Jerusalem; but the Zealots dragged it on until 73, finally killing themselves at **Masada**. The political situation leading up to the war was about the same as it had been, but the excesses of the governors and the temper of the zealots were sufficient to ignite the conflict. When the Temple treasury was diverted into Roman hands, the people reacted strongly and were met with retaliation. The governor of Syria could not quell the rebellion, and

so in 67 the Roman **Vespasian** came and subdued Galilee.

In Jerusalem the Zealots took complete charge of the war effort, but while they were doing this Vespasian gained control of all the surrounding area. In the middle of 69 Vespasian

returned to Rome and left the siege of Jerusalem to his son Titus. Five months later the city was

taken, the Temple burned, the people killed or imprisoned, and most of the city leveled. The war was over except for the strongholds still in Jewish hands, Masada being the last to fall in 73.

The land was devastated by this war. Judaism survived, of course, but without the Temple, the priests, or the sacrifices. The pious were left to develop the new form of the religion, making use of the Synagogue for the study of the Scriptures and the keeping of the Law. A new Council was organized in **Jamnia**, near Joppa (just on the south side of Tel Aviv today). And the leaders now were known as rabbis, since the political parties and their controversies ceased with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The second war, the great war of Rome and the Jews, came in the days of **Hadrian** (131-135 A.D.). Under Trajan there were many conflicts between Jews and Greeks that were met by harsh punishment from Rome. Old issues from the first war were still unresolved, and Zealot refugees stirred up the hatred. Moreover, Jewish Messianic enthusiasm was growing. When Hadrian replaced Trajan it appeared that better times lay ahead; but those hopes were quickly dashed. Hadrian prohibited Jewish customs, especially circumcision, and began his plans to build a temple to Jupiter on the Temple mount, and another temple on the place of the

crucifixion. The unrest broke into war all over the land in 131 and continued until 135 when the

final blow came. It was finally over. Hadrian slew perhaps a million and a half Jews; up to the

Holocaust, this was the most painful event in Jewish memory. Hadrian renamed the land **Palestine** (after the Philistines, Greeks who had come from Troy and the other Aegean areas, Troy being the place from which Aeneas fled to found Rome). The land would now be known as

Palestine. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a Roman colony (called **Aelia Capitalina**, for Hadrian's name and Jupiter's title); and Jews were prohibited from entering it or Bethlehem. Now rabbinic religious activity that stayed in the land moved north to the Galilee, first at **Sepphoris**,

and then **Tiberias** on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. These families later became known

as Masoretes, "traditionists"; they copied and point the manuscripts. Today the standard Hebrew

Bible is called the Masoretic Text.

Many Jews, and many Christians, fled the land entirely, some for what is today's north

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Jordan, and others to Turkey, Russia, and other areas of the world. This was the Diaspora in full

force, the scattering of Jews around the world. There they would live, being persecuted and run

out of country after country. But in the 19

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and 20

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centuries there began a concerted effort by

Jewish people and Bible believing Christians, kings and queens included, to restore Israel to their homeland. And so the prophecies of re-gathering began to be fulfilled. Their presence in the

land was necessary for Daniel's end of the age prophecies to be fulfilled, prophecies that would

mean great persecution of them by the world ruler, and great joy as their Messiah, our Savior, the

Son of Man, would come in glory, redeem and deliver them and all believers from the tyranny of

the world, and from the curse. Thus, the reign of the Messiah would come with power and glory.

The Conclusion of Daniel 11

A.

The Latter Day Counterpart to Antiochus (36-39)

The details of this little section make it impossible to apply the verses to Antiochus IV, and so the vision of Daniel is transported to a future time of persecution, one which will end with

a great military battle and the coming of the Son of Man. There have been many great battles, in

the days of Rome, down through the centuries, the World Wars, any of which would fill some of

the details here—but not the end of the times. Daniel's other prophecies and other biblical writings make it fairly clear that this is the Man of Sin, the Lawless One, the Beasts, the Antichrist, the little horn, who will come to power at the very end of human history as we know

it. ***So Antiochus becomes a type, and Antichrist the antitype or the divinely intended corresponding destroyer.***

Daniel tells how this one will exalt himself ***above every god. Antiochus did not do that, but tried to set up his gods in Jerusalem.*** But this coming one will say arrogant and unheard of

things against all gods, except the god of power, meaning his own power. He will have no respect for the gods of his fathers, and will deal with women, and the love or desire of women,

with indifference and cruelty. He will be a ruthless, atheistic world dictator.

The mention of "god of fortresses" has been given many interpretive suggestions, such as Mars, or Jupiter—but he had no respect for such deities—except to use them for his own advantage. So possibly it means that his own military might will be his "god." And in his contempt for faith, he will desecrate the worship in the holy city, just as Antiochus had brought

in the abomination. He will make use of a "foreign god" as he conquers throughout the lands; and he will make people worship it, perhaps an image of power, perhaps making use of Jupiter,

drawing on the religious superstitions of people for his own advantage.

B.

The Triumph and Fall of the Antichrist (40-45).

This paragraph begins with the mention of an alliance against him from the south and

from the north. This we are told is “at the time of the end”—not back in the Seleucid period. On the analogy of the wars in the past, here the allies are a bloc from the south, Egypt, Libya and the Sudan (Nubians in v. 43), and a Syrian coalition. The king of the north could be from Syria or

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Antioch, but could just as easily come from Europe with his forces (9:26, connected to the Roman Empire bloc). Some suggest Russia, based on analogy of names in a parallel passage (Ezek. 38). The northern king will invade and sweep through countries like a flood (not unlike

Hitler did). It will be an irresistible power.

Verse 41 focuses on the Holy Land as the focal point for the end of the invasions and the final terrible great war. The land of Israel and surrounding states (not Jordan) will be ravaged by

his invasion. The “beautiful land” refers to the favor this land has with God.

Verses 42-45 describe the end. The king of the north, Antichrist, will destroy the southern bloc and march into Egypt to plunder. But news of trouble in the Middle East will draw

him back to crush his opponents in a war between the Seas and Jerusalem, which fits other prophecies about the vicinity of **Megiddo**. The place is called “Mount Megiddo,” *har megiddo*

in Hebrew, *armageddon* in Greek. The location is a natural battlefield; the *tel (mount or mound*

of ruins) at *Megiddo* the central fortress. This has been the place of more battles than anywhere

on earth because of its strategic location. In antiquity every army moving from Egypt to Mesopotamia, or from Turkey to Saudi Arabia, passed through here; even up to the second world

war, it has been a battlefield. It is also easily within striking distance of the beautiful holy mount, Mount Moriah, Jerusalem. Many modern scholars say there will be no Armageddon; but

the Bible mentions it in several places and there is no reason to deny it. Besides, if WWII broken out their soon, no one in the world would be surprised.

Just at a time when this wicked ruler seems to be sweeping aside all opposition, he will come to an end suddenly, with a jolt. The Son of Man will appear on the Mount of Olives.

Zechariah 14 seems to describe a nuclear holocaust when the Lord will suddenly appear and fight against those nations. Revelation 19:19-20 describe the same event, with the destruction of

the Beast and the false Prophet and the kings of the earth. The Beast and the false Prophet will be

captured, judged, and thrown to the lake of fire. This seems to follow Revelation 16:16 chronologically.

This whole description in Daniel eliminates an application to Antiochus, for we know how he died—and it was not with the coming of the Lord. It also makes it totally impossible that

the passage was made up by a zealous priest trying to muster support against the invasion of Antiochus Epiphanes. And, it is totally impossible for this to have been written in the second century after the wars, because Antiochus did not die this way. On the contrary, all Daniel’s

prophecies, as well as so many in other biblical books, harmonize very well for a future fulfillment, of which Antiochus was a mere foreshadowing.

This set of notes is very detailed, because the eleventh chapter of Daniel is very detailed, and very accurate in its descriptions of the Greek period, leading to the Roman period, and then

ultimately the resurgence of the Roman period under the final ruler, the little horn. The message

should bring comfort to the people of faith that God knows the end from the beginning, and even

though it is a terrifying vision of the human history or warfare, it will end in complete triumph

for the Son of God, Christ Jesus, when he comes with saints and angels to judge the world.

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The Twelfth Lesson: Daniel twelve

XII. THE TRIBULATION AND FINAL TRIUMPH OF GOD'S PEOPLE

(Daniel 12:1-13)

A.

The Time of the Great Trouble (1)

The chapter opens with "At that time," picking up where the last chapter ended with the time of the "Antichrist." That chapter dealt with his political and military dealings; this one will look at his internal policy towards God's people. It will be a program of brutal oppression and persecution surpassing anything that has gone before. Jesus in his Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:21) refers to this prophecy of Daniel to be a prediction of the last days in which there will be a great loss of life. It could have been fulfilled in Hadrian's war against Israel, except Christ did not come in glory.

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The period of trouble, called "Jacob's trouble" elsewhere, seems to include the great time of distress in all the world referred to in Revelation 8-16. In those days, which number seven years according to John (corresponding to Daniel's 70th "heptad"), vast percentages of the earth's population will be destroyed. The agent of preservation for God's people will be the same one who fought against the Prince of Persia, Michael, whom God assigned to protect Israel.

The last part of verse 1 guarantees preservation for all whose names are written in the book of life. The figure is used frequently in the Bible, for those who are redeemed, and those who are not (removed from the book; Ps. 69:28; Exod. 32:33; Mal. 3:16; and Rev. 20:12). Their deliverance does not mean they will escape the first death. For in Revelation many martyrs come out of this time. And, verse 2 refers to many who died but attain to the resurrection to life (Rev. 21:8).

B.

The Resurrection and the Judgment (2, 3).

In Genesis when the LORD God breathed his breath into Adam, he imparted eternal life to humans. People will live forever—somewhere. But when sin entered the world, so did death, physical death and eternal or spiritual death (the first death, and the second death in revelation). In the Old Testament when people died they were said to go to "sheol." Now the word "sheol" can refer to (1) hell, (2) the grave, (3) death, or

(4) even a place of life-threatening danger. The context will have to determine in each case which meaning applies. Nowhere is “sheol” used with the sense of hell when the righteous are the topic; in those places it refers to the grave, or death. But for the wicked there is enough description that “sheol” there meant hell (see Isa. 14; Ps. 49; etc.).

In both testaments, when believers die their bodies go to the grave, and their spirits go to be with the Lord. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that we receive a temporary body (“house”) for the soul. The unbelievers die, their bodies go to the grave, and their spirits to “sheol,” the realm of the departed spirits, who are known as “shades,” where death will shepherd them in darkness.

Then, in the final resurrection, everyone will be raised, their resurrected bodies joined with their spirits. The saints will be glorified in body and spirit; the lost will remain unclean, and be condemned. It appears from the New Testament that the resurrection of the believers will come first, called the “first resurrection” (1 Thess. 4), and the resurrection of unbelievers, the “second” (Rev. 20), will come just before the Great White Throne Judgment (believers will not be there—they will already be glorified and reigning with Christ. This, then, is the general overview.

Now Daniel simply announces the general resurrection, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt. He uses the Isaianic term “many” (Isa. 53) to refer to those who died—which is almost everyone (Enoch and Elijah exempt). And awakening from the dust of the earth is clearly a bodily resurrection. They will enter the next phase

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of their existence according to their faith. No one who ever lived can escape the resurrection, although some might wish they could have. The unbelievers will be exposed in their sin and shame and confusion before being led to the place of everlasting punishment. Some try to say that “everlasting” does not mean eternal. They might say that, but Scripture is clear and it holds no such hope.

Verse 3 describes the reward of the righteous. They are described here as “wise,” who “lead many to righteousness.” They will be glorified. How are they wise? They acted sensibly in view of the divine revelation and warning of judgment (see Ps. 2:9-12). And the fruit of a life of faith, of Godly and righteous living, will be to influence others in the path of righteousness. For faithfulness there will be great reward, essentially positions of responsibility and authority in the age to come (e.g., Jesus said they would be “rulers over cities”) as we reign with Christ on earth (Rev. 5:11). These verses clearly affirm the doctrine of resurrection and eternal life. They match Job 19:26 and Psalms 16:11, 17:15 and 73:23,24 in these points. And Isaiah 25:8 says God will swallow up death and wipe away tears; and Isaiah 26:19 more clearly says the dead will live. And of course Ezekiel 37 uses the vision of the bones which is a description of resurrection to portray the restoration to life of the nation. So there were many hints and many clear statements about bodily resurrection in the Old Testament. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proved it was not just a nice thought or wishful thinking—it is a future reality

C.

The Sealed Prophecies and the Three and a Half Years (4-7)

Daniel is told to seal up the scroll until the end (scrolls were rolled up and then sealed with a wax seal to hold them rolled up). They kept documents sealed so that they were secure and safe for future consultation. But in the meantime many who eagerly desire to know what it means will be diligent to learn and understand.

In verses 5-7 saw another vision of two messengers, one on each side of the river. One asked how long it would be til these things were fulfilled, and the other answers “three and a half years” (that is, one half of Daniel’s 70th seven year period; 9:26, the second half). In that period the brave defenders of the faith will be overwhelmed by Antichrist and appear doomed to defeat (Zech. 14:2). But at the last moment God will intervene and the invaders be destroyed (see Zech. 14:3ff).

D.

Daniel’s Final Commission (8-13)

Daniel was still very confused over the whole sequence of things (as we would if we had no New Testament yet). He was concerned: would the holy people survive after they were broken? The angel did not answer Daniel directly, at least not til the end of verse 13: at the end,

Daniel, as one of the righteous, will rise from the grave and receive this heavenly inheritance. But the more immediate answer is that the words are closed up, preserved in a safe place as a validated document.

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But before the end the people of God will be purified and refined in their faith by suffering. But the unbelieving world will not improve; they will remain wicked. There will be no

general movement towards God and righteousness by the world.

Then, as a time frame for the comfort of people in those days, the prophecy tells how long the suffering will last. From the time of the setting up of the abomination that causes desolation til the Beast is destroyed will be 1290 days. Three and a half (lunar) years is 1260 days (1278 for solar years). The setting up of the false worship must start a little before the exact

halfway mark of the seven year period, for the persecution covers three and a half years. But for

the saints enduring the plagues and persecutions, knowing that it will end at a specific time will

be comforting. Then, in verse 12, we get the number 1335 days, about a month and a half more.

What will take place in that period is not stated—cleanup from the war (Ezek. 39:12), inauguration of the kingdom? But those who are alive on earth and survive the tribulation are called “blessed.” They will be citizens of the most glorious society in human history, the kingdom of Christ (Zech. 9:10; Isa. 11:9).

And so the angel told Daniel to go his way to the end, and then he will rest (die), but will be raised for this glorious future. This is true of all saints who die before these terrible times of trouble.